健速
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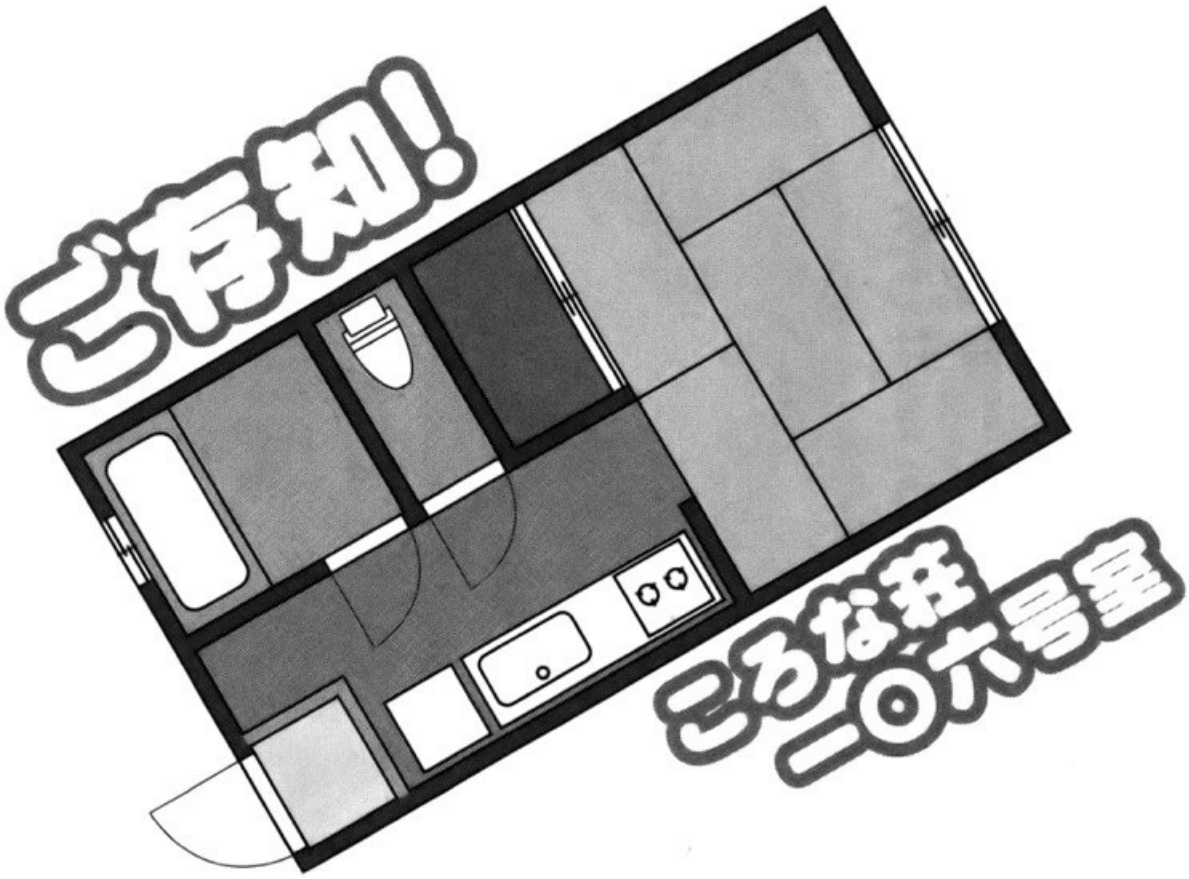
2
不思議ちゃん



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A Day in Room 106

Part 1

Friday, April 24th

Satomi Koutarou's ability to wake up was absolutely terrible.

Today was no exception; even though the strong morning light shone down on him, he showed no signs of waking up.

His mouth was wide open as he snored almost as loudly as the fridge's compressor.

The morning light bothered him, so he thrashed about. However, as he was right next to the wall, he was only able to turn around halfway before colliding with it.

Koutarou had originally spread his futon in the center of the room, but he had been rolling around in his sleep. Before he knew it, he had rolled into a corner of the room.

However, because of that, the sunlight was no longer washing over him, and he fell back into a deep sleep.

The time was now 6 AM.

The sunshine streaming through the window was bright, and a wide blue sky stretched across the horizon.

It was now the later half of April, and the temperature was starting to rise.

Opening the window would probably let in a breath of fresh air.

However, the first thing to open in Corona House Room 106 was not the window.

Along with a small sound, the tatami closest to the entrance lifted slightly, and the plastic bag on top of it started shaking.

Inside of it, several cup noodles could be seen.

It soon stopped quaking, however.

The next moment, the mat lifted up from the ground, and a girl appeared from underneath.

"...I keep telling her to put them away..."

Because the girl had lifted away the tatami, the cup noodles spilled out from the plastic bag.

The girl saw this and sighed. She then crawled up into Room 106 with her long and beautiful black hair swaying.

The girl's name was Kiriha.

Her clothes resembled a kimono[1] and a shrine maiden's outfit, and her narrow eyes left quite an impression.

She was one of the girls planning to seize control of Room 106.

"Hey ho, hey ho~"

"Ho, ho, hohoho!"

Following Kiriha from under the tatami were two haniwas about 30 centimeters tall.

At the same time Kiriha was putting back the tatami mat, one of the walls of the room began glowing, and the figure of another girl appeared in Room 106.

The girl had short hair and a diligent look and was wearing something resembling a military uniform.

Her name was Ruth.

1 A traditional Japanese garment, essentially full-length robes

She was an alien who had come to the planet from over 10 million light-years away.

“Kyaaa!?”

Ruth entered the room and screamed.

It wasn’t because she had fallen, but rather because of where she had appeared.

“I’m sorry, Satomi-sama! I’ll move right away!”

Ruth had appeared right above Koutarou.

Her feet wrapped in stockings were planted on top of his face.

The glowing wall served as a bridge between the girl’s spaceship and Room 106.

When passing through it, one would instantaneously be transported to the spaceship in orbit around Earth.

However, unlike a normal door, there was no way of knowing what it was like on the other side until you had passed through it.

Because of that, Ruth had unknowingly stepped on Koutarou’s face.

“I am truly sorry for stepping on you morning after morning, Satomi-sama!”

Ruth hurriedly got off his face and apologized.

“…”

However, Koutarou gave no response.

“Sa-Satomi-sama?”

“You’re quite the man, Satomi Koutarou.”

The two girls looked at Koutarou; Ruth was surprised whilst Kiriha was admiring him.

Koutarou was still sleeping and snoring.

Despite being stepped on, Koutarou showed no signs of waking up, almost as if nothing had happened in the first place.

With the appearance of Kiriha and Ruth, the plain room livened up immediately.

Their identities aside, the two were wearing aprons and looked very much like what girls of their age normally would..

“Kiriha-sama, what should I do with this long and slender vegetable?”

“We’re adding the leek to the miso soup, so cut it into round slices.”

“Okay, I understand.”

Kiriha held a ladle in front of the stove and Ruth picked up a knife in front of the sink.

The two were working together to prepare breakfast.

However, Ruth was not used to cooking earth-styled meals, leaving Kiriha to do the cooking with Ruth helping her.

Looking at the two of them working together, they gave the impression of being good friends.
Not many people knew that the two of them were actually enemies.
“Gooooooood mooooorniiiiiiiing!”
And then, one of the few people that knew of their relationship appeared.
It was a grade-schooler girl wearing a summer dress.
“Good morning.”
“Good morning, Sanae.”
“Nnn…”
The girl was sleepily rubbing her eyes as she appeared from the ceiling.
She had not flipped a mat or made a wall glow, but literally just passed through the ceiling.
Her name was Sanae.
She was a ghost living in the room.
“What’s for breakfast today?”
“Rice and miso soup, and the fish we bought yesterday… Kiriha-sama, what was it called again?”
“Salmon, and then there are the wieners that didn’t fit into today’s bento.”
However, neither Kiriha nor Ruth showed any hints of surprise about the way Sanae had appeared.
They were acting like how people would talk with their friends.
The two were already used to Sanae.
“Are they shaped like octopuses[1]?”
“The best a girl of age could make.”
“Really?”
“She’s lying. Kiriha lies with a straight face… Oh right, I almost forgot. Can I check the taste!?”
“I don’t mind. I was going to serve it to Koutarou either way.”
“Yes!”
As Kiriha gave her approval, Sanae looked delighted.
Sanae, who was young from the start, gave off an even stronger impression of being a child as she jumped for joy.
However, for some reason, she didn’t touch the wiener but instead headed towards the inner room.
“Wake up, Koutarou! Hey!”
“Nnn…”
Entering the room, Sanae got to work on waking Koutarou up.
She needed Koutarou’s help to taste the food, as she was a ghost and couldn’t eat anything herself.
So in order for her to taste anything, she needed to possess someone and share their senses.
And the one she would possess was none other than Koutarou.
Sanae and Koutarou had a truce, and in return, she got to possess Koutarou.
“Hurry up and wake up! The octopus will get cold!”
“Nnn… I can’t eat anymore… mhm…”
“I won’t let you be the only one eating delicious food!”
However, Koutarou still showed no signs of waking up after being shaken and shouted at.

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1 A standard for lunches in Japan are wieners that have been cut to look like an octopus.

It also seemed like Koutarou was having a dream about eating something, and that frustrated Sanae even more.
“Kukuku, Mackenzie, I’m leaving the bill to you… mm…”
“Why do you always deny the reason for ghosts to exist! I won’t ask for you to be surprised, but at least listen to my voice! If you get shaken open your eyes! Say ‘Good morning my angel’ to this lovable Sanae!”
“Don’t cry because something like that… It’s pitiful…”
“Anyone would want to cry!”
Koutarou, who still showed no signs of waking up, amazed Sanae and drove her past her limit.
“…In that case…”
Sanae, with tears forming in her eyes, caused a Poltergeist phenomenon and lifted up a nearby encyclopedia.
“Just you look! If you think this girl will just hold it in you’re making a big mistake!”
She showed a grim smile as she said that.
She then tilted the encyclopedia. It was clear that she was planning on stabbing Koutarou’s head with the side of it.
“…Hm?”
However, just as she was about to put her plan into action, the wall began glowing in the same way it had when Ruth had appeared.
The only thing different from before was that a different person appeared.
Anything apart from that was exactly the same.
The girl who had jumped out from the wall was slightly older than Sanae.
She had beautiful golden hair, a white dress, and deep and clear blue eyes.
Her name was Theia.
She was an alien princess, and Ruth was her servant.
“Guaaaaaaaaaah!?”
“I didn’t realize you were here, pleb.”
And just like Ruth, she stepped on his face.
Unlike Ruth, however, she didn’t put any effort into avoiding stepping on Koutarou.
And also unlike Ruth, she was wearing shoes.
Her high heels sunk into Koutarou’s forehead.
“Owowowowow!?”
“You don’t learn, do you? Why do you keep sleeping there?… This is why you’re just a plebeian.”
As Theia said that, she stepped off his face and onto the mat.
The edges of her white dress fluttered in a very fitting way. However, Koutarou didn’t care about that.
“You idiot, Tulip! How many times do I have to tell you!? Don’t step on people! And don’t wear shoes inside the room!”
A red bruise had been left on Koutarou’s forehead.
Because all of Theia’s weight had been focused into the heels, not even Koutarou was able to remain asleep.

“You dare call me an idiot again, pleb!?”
“I’ll say it as many times as I have to, you idiot!”
“How dare you show your master such disrespect!”
Koutarou and Theia butted heads and shouted at each other.
“Besides, why do you only complain about me!? I’m surely not the only one who steps on you!”
“I’m truly sorry Satomi-sama. I would like to apologize for stepping on you over and over again.”
Ruth entered the room and deeply bowed to Koutarou.
“No, there’s no need for Ruth-san to apologize. Please raise your head.”
Koutarou had no intention of complaining about Ruth.
“Tulip is the one in the wrong!”
“But…”
“Pleb! Why do you only forgive Ruth!? It’s just wrong! Why do you only favor Ruth!?”
Theia’s face flushed red and she stomped her feet on the floor.
Her heel pierced the tatami repeatedly.
“It’s obvious, you stupid princess! How about you touch your chest and ask yourself that instead!?”
“Chest…?”
Theia vacantly stared at her chest, she then looked over at Ruth’s chest.
“Y-Your Highness!?”
In return, Ruth blushed and covered her chest with her arms.
“…Breasts…”
Her anger which had disappeared with a vacant look was reignited.
“Are you saying you’ll forgive her because her breasts are big!?”
Theia completely lost sight of her surroundings as she shouted at Koutarou, enraged.
“It’s nothing like that!”
“Koutarou, who cares about her breasts? You can’t even tell if she has them or not. More importantly, the food tasting!”
“Are you picking a fight with me!?”
“You can’t, Your Highness!”
And just like that, a fistfight started first thing in the morning inside of the small room.
“…Mm, this tastes great.”
However, Kiriha, who was still in the kitchen, didn’t care; instead she tasted the miso soup and put on a satisfied smile.
“This time I’ll make sure I teach you who your owner is!”
“Just try it, Tulip! The only place you’re going is in the flower bed!”
“How much are you going to belittle your master before you’re satisfied! You rude Neanderthal!”
“Both of you please stop it!”
“Food tasting! Food tasting!”
“Today is another peaceful day… Or far from it…”
Kiriha showed no signs of worry; this was everyday life in Room 106.

“Well then, let’s eat.”
“Thanks for the food!”
Once the breakfast preparations were complete, Sanae jumped onto Koutarou’s back and put her arms around his neck.
According to Sanae, that was what she needed to do to possess someone, but at a glance it looked like a child clinging to the back of her father.
“Hurry up and eat, Koutarou!”
“…”
Though Sanae was dying for Koutarou to start eating, Koutarou himself was not staring at the food, but at what was in front of him.
“…”
Sitting opposite of Koutarou at the tea table was Theia.
Theia was glaring back at Koutarou. The two of them had been doing this for a while.
Aside from the mark on Koutarou’s forehead, there were scratches and bite marks left on him.
Theia, on the other hand, had a blue bruise near her eye.
They were injuries from the fight from just a while ago.
“Your Highness, your food will get cold if you keep doing this.”
“You should be saying that to the pleb! What’s wrong with disciplining a fool who raises their hand against their master!?”
Ruth was sitting between the two, desperately trying to get the two to make up.
“Ha, to think *you* are calling someone a fool.”
“Hmph, you lowlife.”
However, the two of them had no intention of making up and sulked instead.
Although the two of them could not get along, their stubbornness was just the same.
“However, Your Highness, we’re the ones who started it.”
“I don’t care. A vassal shouldn’t care about the circumstances and instead respect me.”
“Who are you calling vassal!?”
“Grow up, you two…”
“I’m already grown up. Tulip is the one who’s in the wrong!”
The two of them looked away and argued in an indirect fashion.
That was because they strongly acknowledged one another as rivals.
“We can’t have that, Koutarou.”
Koutarou saw Kiriha smile wryly at the corner of his eye.
Kiriha was seated across from Ruth, between Theia and Koutarou.
They were sitting around the tea table in the order of Koutarou and Sanae, Ruth, Theia, and Kiriha.
Lately, they would often find themselves sitting in this order.
So Koutarou would turn his face in the direction of Kiriha.
“Kenji and Shizuka will worry if you make a scary face like that.”
“But, Tulip is — ”
“That’s enough.”

Koutarou tried to voice his complaints, but Kiriha stopped him by placing her finger in front of his mouth.
Kiriha smiled at Koutarou as she leaned towards him.
“I don’t like that kind of Koutarou either. I prefer you when you’re smiling.”
“Eh…”
The soft, warm tip of her finger touching his lips felt like a kiss.
Her bright smile and calm eyes sucked Koutarou in.
“Listen, Koutarou. It’s alright to make such an expression when it’s called for, but that doesn’t mean you should show it to unrelated people. Kenji, Shizuka, and even I will be saddened. You can’t show your anger to those you treasure.”
“Ah…”
“Let go of your anger Koutarou. It is for my and your own sake.”
Kiriha calmly admonished Koutarou, and his anger vanished.
Koutarou was angry at Theia because of her selfishness.
So it was selfish of him to take out his anger on people other than Theia.
Looking at Kiriha’s smile Koutarou realized this.
“Just a minuuuteee!! I keep quiet, and what’s this nonsense I hear!?”
“W-What!?”
As Koutarou was about to nod to Kiriha, Sanae, who was still clinging on to Koutarou, shouted at the two.
Sanae tightened her grip around Koutarou’s neck as if to choke him.
“Kiriha! Don’t act like you’re not Koutarou’s enemy! It’s fine if he shouts at you, since you’re planning on taking this room for yourself as well! Don’t try to casually act like you’re not a part of this!”
“Fufufu, you sure are strict, Sanae.”
“And Koutarou! What’s with you!? She’s just trying to get you to let your guard down so she can take the room for herself; this is what she always does!”
“S-Sorry, it was just a reflex…”
“Don’t say it’s just a reflex! Give it a rest, Koutarou! Just how many times do you think you’ve almost fallen for her tricks these past days!? What do you think would have happened if I wasn’t around!?”
“I was wrong, so just calm down, okay?”
“…Are you reflecting on what you did wrong?”
As Koutarou apologized, the force of her voice and in her arms dropped.
“I am. Of course I am.”
“Do you have any word of thanks to the beautiful ghost who keeps helping you?”
“Thank you for always looking out for me…”
Koutarou was actually feeling some gratitude to Sanae.
The only reason he hadn’t been fooled by Kiriha and still had a place to live was thanks to Sanae.
If it wasn’t for the truce with Sanae, he would have been fooled long ago.
“Good, now hurry up and eat. I’m starving.”
Satisfied by Koutarou’s answer, Sanae pointed to the table.

On the table there was rice, miso soup, salmon and wieners cut into octopuses.
It was the meal Sanae had been waiting for.
“I got it. Let’s eat!”
“Koutarou, start with the wieners!”
As Koutarou picked up his chopsticks, Sanae had returned to normal.
That voice was like her looks, innocent and lively.
“…Look now, Sanae.”
Koutarou’s chopsticks stopped just before reaching the wiener.
“What?”
“No, it’s nothing.”
You’ve been tamed with Kiriha’s cooking…
Koutarou kept himself from saying what was on his mind.
“Oh? Then hurry!”
“Okay, okay.”
But why don’t I want to say it?
Koutarou himself was uncertain of why he restrained himself.
“Your Highness, it’s almost time.”
“Very well, then let’s go.”
Ruth, who was doing the dishes, returned to the inner room and proclaimed so.
Theia, who was playing with her empty cup, put it down on the tea table and stood up.
At that point, the skirt of her dress extended greatly and covered a fraction of the room.
In this narrow room, her dress was a large obstacle.
“Well then everyone, we’ll meet again later.”
“Don’t be late, pleb.”
“Of course I won’t.”
“Then that’s good. A vassal’s failure is my failure. It seems you are aware that you are my vassal. Very good.”
Theia and Ruth returned to the other side of the glowing wall.
They returned to their spaceship to change, after which they would take their own route to school.
“…She just keeps spouting selfish things…”
“That girl seems determined to make you her servant.”
Koutarou and Sanae, who were drinking tea by the table, stared at the glowing wall and sighed.
Kiriha, who was drinking next to them, smiled wryly and dropped her shoulders.
“That is what she needs to do to succeed to the throne. She can’t just back down. Of course, I can’t just back down either. Well then…”
Kiriha waited for Koutarou to finish drinking his tea and brought the empty cups to the sink.
“Ho!”
“Hey-ho!”
At the same time, the two haniwas flipped the tatami closest to the front door.
Below it was a tunnel leading to Kiriha’s secret base.

At the start it had been just a hole in the ground. However before anyone noticed, it had been surrounded with concrete and tiling.
That was thanks to the two haniwas.
“I will be taking my leave as well. Let’s meet again in the classroom, Koutarou, Sanae.”
Like Theia and Ruth, Kiriha would head to Harukaze High School using another route.
Both Kiriha and Theia did not want to cause any unnecessary commotion.
“Yeah, see you lat — ”
“Stoooop!”
Sanae’s fist crashed down on Koutarou’s head as he was about to see Kiriha off.
“You’re being tricked again! You don’t need to see that woman off!”
“R-Right.”
Not good, I’m completely falling for Kiriha’s kindness.
Koutarou warned himself.
Koutarou was going along with the flow of Kiriha’s normal behavior. However, everything she said was a trap to lure Koutarou into a false sense of security.
If Koutarou was taken in by her kindness, he might wake up to his room being used to invade the surface tomorrow.
“Fufufu, so you won’t believe that I’m seriously having feelings for Koutarou?”
“Isn’t that obvious!? Where could anyone find romance in you!?”
“...Koutarou, do you feel the same?”
Kiriha’s smile disappeared as she sadly lowered her eyes.
She crossed her hands in front of her chest and whispered to him in a sweet voice.
“Ugh...”
When faced with her slightly moist eyes and sweet voice, Koutarou unconsciously swallowed his saliva.
Even though he knew she was an enemy, Koutarou was a boy in puberty.
When she acted like that, he couldn’t help but waver.
“Koutarou! Get a grip!”
“Y-Yeah, s-sorry Sanae.”
Not good, even though I know, this still happens...
Kiriha’s attacks were getting more skillful by the day.
This was thanks to Kiriha getting to know Koutarou; she was changing her strategies little by little.
“Fufufu, another failure huh... I’ll see you later, Koutarou.”
Kiriha disappeared into the tunnel, leaving behind a smile.
The two haniwas followed, and finally, the mat was put back in place.
“...This is bad for my heart...”
Koutarou’s heart was throbbing as he stared at the tatami Kiriha had left from.
“That woman is the biggest tease...”
Meanwhile, Sanae puffed up her face, making a sulking expression, and sighed heavily.
“Sanae, let’s go.”

“Just wait a second.”
Koutarou had changed into his uniform and was preparing to head for school. Meanwhile, Sanae was still trying to put on her uniform.
The scarf by her chest was bent diagonally, a part of the jacket was caught in the skirt, and her underwear was peeping through.
She was also only wearing one of her socks.
Her outfit looked terrible. Even Koutarou, who was indifferent when it came to clothing, thought so.
“Can’t you do it any better…?”
“S-Sorry… Tehehehe!”
Sanae let out an embarrassed laugh as she put on her other sock.
Koutarou pulled out the jacket from her skirt and corrected her scarf.
“Thank you, Koutarou.”
“That’s fine and all, but why are you wearing a uniform to begin with?”
“It’s cute, isn’t it?”
Once she finished changing, Sanae spun around once in front of Koutarou.
The size of the uniform didn’t match her size and was slightly too large.
However, that increased the loveliness of it all, and Koutarou agreed that she looked cute.
“Yeah, but I’m more interested in knowing why a ghost is changing clothes. More importantly, where did you get a uniform a ghost can wear? I’ve been dying to know for a while now.”
“It’s fine because I’m a girl. If you keep worrying about tiny details you’ll go bald!”
“Are they really tiny details though?…”
Koutarou unconsciously stared at Sanae’s uniform.
In return, Sanae grabbed the hems of her skirt and gave him a curtsy.
“They are. Ghosts in movies change their outfit between scenes all the time. That’s just what ghosts do! Ah, the tragic heroine, Sanae-chan!”
“Now that you mention it, the mysterious man in a hockey mask changes his weapons between the scenes as well. From chainsaw to machete to hatchet… I wonder where he gets those?”
“Don’t compare this to that! You’re always like that!”
“Uwa!?”
Sanae grabbed hold of Koutarou’s neck in a sudden fit of rage.
The doorbell rang, and Sanae loosened her grip on Koutarou’s neck and jumped off his back.
“Hey, Kou, are you up?”
“Satomi-kuuun!”

Koutarou's friends' voices came from the other side of the door.
"I'm awake! I'll be right there!"
Koutarou headed for the front door, carrying his bag he had left nearby.
"Sanae, you haven't forgotten anything, have you?"
"No, I'm all good."
Sanae turned off the light and headed towards the front door with Koutarou.
"What about you, Koutarou?"
"I'm..."
Koutarou, who was in the middle of putting on his shoes, stopped moving.
"Hmm, I have a feeling I'm forgetting something..."
"What? What are you forgetting?"
"I have no idea. Well, if I can't remember it right away it's probably nothing important."
"Then let's go, Koutarou."
"Yeah!"
Koutarou nodded at Sanae and continued to put his shoes back on.
"Make sure you don't forget to make it so Landlord-san can't see you, okay?"
"Aye aye, sir♪"

Part 2

Koutarou and the rest had left Room 106, and now the only sounds in the room were the clock on the wall and the fridge.
Apart from that, the sounds from outside leaked in. One could hear birdsong and the sound of distant cars.
However, as time passed, the sound from the outside gradually grew louder.
Rush hour began, and large crowds started gathering by nearby stations. Bicycles and cars started driving to work or school.
As the time for school drew closer, the sound of preschoolers mischievously blowing on whistles reached the room.
However, after 30 minutes, the sounds stopped. Silence returned to the room.
At that point, a suspicious sound rang out inside of Room 106.
It had originated from inside the wardrobe.
A moment passed, and the sliding door slammed open.
"I'm lateee!"
A girl was seated on the upper half of the wardrobe.
The bottom half contained Koutarou's belongings, but for some reason, the upper half had a half-crying girl who was seated on top of a spread-out futon.
"W-Why didn't anyone wake me up!? Everybody already left as well!"
The girl's name was Yurika.
She was a cosplayer Koutarou and the rest were familiar with.
Koutarou, who mentioned he was forgetting something, was referring to Yurika.

“This will be the tenth day I‘ll be late! The teacher‘s definitely going to yell at me! They‘re all terrible! They know I‘m absent a lot and just left me anyways!”
Yurika hurriedly changed from her pajamas to her uniform whilst still inside of the wardrobe.
The upper half of the wardrobe had several small shelves where Yurika‘s belongings were lined up.
Although it was very narrow inside of the wardrobe, Yurika showed no signs of being affected as she skillfully changed her clothes.
Surprisingly, Yurika was using the upper half of the wardrobe as her own room.
“Alright, I‘m done changing! If I don‘t hurry I‘ll miss the first period!”
Having finished changing, Yurika grabbed her bag and jumped out of the wardrobe.
An odd noise screamed out as she landed.
“…Hm?”
Noticing the sound, Yurika looked down on the ground and saw a white plastic bag below under her foot.
“I-It couldn‘t be…”
When she saw the bag Yurika shuddered.
Despite being, in a hurry the surprised Yurika slowly lifted her foot.
If the bag contained what Yurika was thinking of, it would be an event more serious than being late to school.
“N-Noooooooooooo!!”
What was below Yurika‘s foot was exactly what she had feared; it was the bag containing her cup noodles.
When Yurika had jumped out of the wardrobe, she had landed and crushed the majority of her cup noodles.
“Why is it over here!? I know I left it over there! Why did this happen!?”
Yurika completely fell into panic.
Because of the recession, the price of cup noodles had soared.
The best price available was 98 yen during specials.
Yurika had destroyed that important food.
She had trampled and destroyed six of the cup noodles.
Two days‘ worth of food had vanished with a single step.
“Will I be able to eat it if I gather it all!?”
The mental damage she suffered was huge, and she stopped moving as she groveled and stared at the broken and scattered remains.
„…No, you can‘t do this Yurika! Gathering it up and eating it is just… Besides, it would be bad for your body!”
For a moment she thought of eating it up, but her pride got in the way.
However, with her current economic situation and the attachment to the cup noodles, her pride gradually gave in.
“But I need to pick it up! If I don‘t eat anything for two days… But… if I pick it up and eat it, my pride as a human being… But… Not eating anything for two days… Two days!”

Yurika hesitated.
After she had picked up the cup noodles from the ground, she was hesitating whether to throw them away or eat them.
It was just a simple choice between two options, but to Yurika it held a much deeper meaning.
An intense inner conflict was raging inside of Yurika‘s mind.
Would she throw away the food she needed to survive, or would she throw away her pride as a human?
She was facing an important decision regarding her humanity.
„...But if I throw away my pride, I‘ll be able to fill my stomach! That‘s right, Yurika, you can‘t live off of your pride! You have to fill up your stomach first! You have to survive, otherwise you can‘t protect your pride!”
In the end, Yurika threw away her pride.
She just couldn‘t bring herself to throw away the cup noodles.
She couldn‘t forget the synthetic taste and the texture of the instant noodles.
“I should value my life! I need to fulfill my purpose as a magical girl! I need to teach the children various important things!”
Yurika quickly put her plan into action and gathered the broken noodles into the plastic bag.
Yurika would not make it in time for the second period today.
At this rate, she wouldn‘t be able to carry on to the next grade.
“Yurika Fight! Yurika Fight!”
However, only one thing mattered to Yurika right now.
She needed to gather her food; it was the second most important thing to her after her life.
She was not thinking of anything else.
“This is a magical girl‘s duty! Their important duty! It can‘t be helped!”
She was the self-proclaimed magical girl of love and courage, Rainbow Yurika.
Everyone was convinced that she was just a cosplayer.
As Yurika headed for school, the room once again fell into silence.
Around this time, a peaceful atmosphere gathered in Room 106.
From time to time, the voices of housewives going out to shop could be heard, and sometimes, a truck could be heard passing by.
But in general, Corona House was quiet, and it continued to be so until the afternoon.
At 2 PM in the afternoon, the children who were going home passed by Corona House.
As they headed home, they were playing something, or talking about what they saw on TV yesterday, or how the pudding they had for desert was delicious; their conversations entered the room one after the other.
As time passed, the age of those passing by Corona House gradually increased, and the voices of children playing in a nearby park could be heard.
It was around that time that people started returning to Room 106.
“I‘m hooooome.”
The first one to return to the room was Ruth.

Her voice echoed in the empty room.
She stood by the front door holding a large shopping bag.
Unlike the other four girls, Koutarou had entrusted her with the shopping.
She was carrying the groceries that Koutarou and the others would eat for dinner.
“Oh? What‘s this?”
As Ruth was putting the groceries into the fridge, she noticed the plastic bag next to the sink.
She peeked into the bag and saw the splintered Styrofoam cups and crushed instant noodles.
„...It seems like it‘s trash.”
Apart from the Styrofoam and noodles, there was also a lot of dust inside of the bag.
Ruth was aware that the noodles were food, but nobody could eat something mixed with trash.
And while Ruth felt like it was a waste, she threw the bag into the garbage can.
She made sure to sort the garbage as well.
“Now then, next is...”
As she finished throwing away the garbage, she washed her hands and finished putting the groceries in the fridge.
Although she was unused to how to act on Earth at first, she now showed no signs of hesitation.
This was in part because she had spent half a month on Earth, but her personality also played a big part in it.
Although she held the official position of a protection officer, she was very well versed in domestic matters.
As Ruth finished putting the groceries in the fridge, two more people returned to Room 106.

Part 3

“However, just playing card games all the time is getting old. How about we use next month’s sports festival?”
“As you say, Theia-dono; just playing card games all the time is getting boring. But the sports festival would be a challenge of stamina.”
Two figures appeared as the front door was open: Theia and Kiriha.
The two of them were peacefully talking about the sports festival to be held in May.
“For example, there’s the obstacle marathon for clubs, right? We’d be able to have a fair fight using that, don’t you think?”
“I see, with that it certainly would be...”
“Welcome back, Your Highness, Kiriha-sama.”
“Ahh, I’m back.”
“I am back as well.”
Ruth welcomed them back as she closed the fridge. The two casually entered the room as if it was their own.
“Your Highness, your shoes, your shoes!”
“Oh, right.”
Theia had stepped on the mat by the entrance still wearing her shoes.

She hurriedly stepped back onto the concrete floor and took them off.
"...This country sure has some weird customs."
"You don't have to mention that."
"That plebeian is my vassal, so he should value my nation's customs rather than his own."
"It's proper manners to respect a nation's customs."
Theia voiced complaints about having to take off her shoes.
Koutarou would get angry whenever she would forget to take off her shoes as well.
Theia was stubborn and might actually have been more inclined to take of her shoes if Koutarou hadn't burst out in rage.
"That doesn't matter anymore. Kiriha, I'm thinking of bringing up what we were talking about with Koutarou, what do you think?"
"I don't mind. I will support your suggestion, Theia-dono."
Kiriha obediently agreed with Theia's suggestion, which was because she had a plan.
If they would compete in the sports festival, Theia, who had a weaker physique, was definitely at a disadvantage.
Theia was also not used to sports on Earth.
And since Sanae was a ghost, it would essentially be a competition between Kiriha and Koutarou.
That said, who knows what she's thinking... I can't simply let my guard down.
However, Theia was smiling full of confidence.
Seeing that smile made Kiriha feel slightly uneasy.
And a plan began forming inside of Kiriha's head. She had to be prepared, just to be on the safe side.
As Kiriha and the rest were talking, the front door opened. One more person appeared by the entrance.
"I'm baaack."
"Welcome back, Yurika-sama."
"I'm back, Ruth-san."
Yurika had returned.
For some reason, she sighed heavily by the front door.
"...Is something the matter, Yurika-sama?"
"That's... The teacher got angry at me because I'm late so often..."
"Is that so?"
Yurika was sighing because she had been yelled at by her teacher.
After school, she had been scolded and was now depressed.
"Please cheer up, Yurika-sama."
"Thank you, Ruth-san. You're right, I can't just stay depressed! Yurika Fight!"
Encouraged by Ruth, Yurika recovered slightly and showed a small smile.
However, shortly after that, Yurika stared at the sink with an amazed expression.
"Eh?"
"Is something wrong?"
"Ru-Ruth-san, w-wasn't there a plastic bag here!? A big white plastic bag from the super market!"

Yurika began to panic.
She had left the plastic bag on top of the sink this morning.
She had been planning on eating it when she returned today, but now it was nowhere to be found.
“Oh, if you’re talking about the trash I threw it away.”

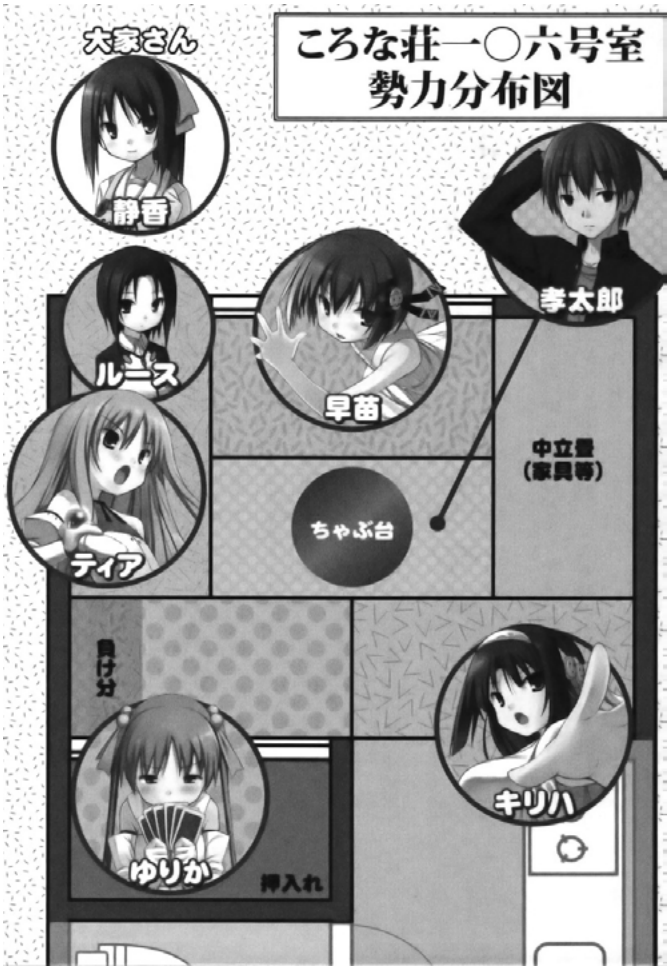
“T-Threw it!? You threw it away!?”
“Yes… Was there a problem?”
“Kyaaaaaa!”
Yurika didn’t answer Ruth, it was no longer the time for that.
Yurika hurriedly threw off her shoes and jumped towards the garbage can next to the sink.
“Please be alright!”
Yurika prayed with all of her might as she opened the lid of the garbage can.
“Yurika-sama?”
“Ahh….”
However, reality was harsh.
Ruth had opened the plastic bag and sorted its contents.
The burnable Styrofoam cups had been put in burnable waste, while the noodles had been thrown out with the garbage.
“W-Why did it turn out like this…”
“Is something the matter, Yurika-sama?”
The noodles had mixed with the other garbage.
At this point, not even Yurika could think of eating it.
“Aaaaaaaa!”
Yurika was intensely discouraged.
And an immense hunger attacked her at the same time.
Having lost what she was planning on eating, her appetite had instead been stimulated.
“There’s no longer hope for recovery…”
Tears streamed down Yurika’s cheeks as her stomach growled.
It was enough for even Ruth to hear.
“Why… Why does this always happen to me?… I was just working as hard as I could…”
“Yurika-sama, what’s wrong? Yurika-sama!?”
Yurika was no longer able to hear Ruth’s voice.
She was crying whilst staring down at the floor.
Those tears dropped down from her cheek and formed a spotted pattern on the mat.
Then in that spotted pattern a noodle floated up.
Noticing that, Yurika hurriedly picked it up from her own tears.
“Your Highness! Kiriha-sama! Yurika-sama is…!”
“What, did something happen?”
“Yurika?”

Called by Ruth, Theia and Kiriha looked into the kitchen, but Yurika was still looking down on the floor.
“Is this all…? Is this fragment all I have to live on for the next two days?”
Yurika’s stomach growled as she looked down on the fragment of noodle in her hand.

Part 4

In Room 106, playing card games after dinner was the norm.
But it was not a fun game to deepen their friendship; instead, it was a battle of who would seize control of the room.
In Room 106, there were six tatami mats.
One of those tatami mats was covered with furniture, leaving five.
The amount of people competing for the room was also five.
As such, each person controlled one tatami mat.
Koutarou controlled the middle tatami mat; when the tea table was not there, that was where he normally sat.
He also spread his futon there.
South of that, the tatami mat by the window was Sanae’s.
That was her spot, but since she usually hung off of Koutarou’s back, she was often not found there.
However, when the tea table was in the center of the room, Koutarou retreated back to the tatami mat by the window, and that was when she could be found there.
Kiriha’s tatami mat was the one closest to the kitchen.
The tunnel leading into the underground also happened to be under that tatami mat.
It would be an awkward place to live, but after entering the tunnel she would soon find herself in her secret base, so she suffered no inconvenience.
Yurika’s tatami mat was next to Kiriha’s, and was positioned in front of the wardrobe.
Yurika started living in the wardrobe before anyone noticed, and that tatami mat naturally fell under her control.
However, since she was weak to pressure, she would often allow the other invaders in and suffered for it.
Theia’s tatami mat was the one furthest back in the room, in front of the glowing wall.
She often put a mini table and chair meant for tea there.
And because she was wearing such a large dress, it would often fall into the territory of the other tatami mats.
The one most likely to invade Yurika’s tatami mat was Theia.
Each mat was converted into 180 points, and control was calculated from that.
One point was one centimeter, and 180 points was 180 centimeters, or one whole tatami mat.
By using card games, they would fight over these points.
Meaning that winning over others would be the same as increasing your territory.
Normally there were five games a day, and they would each play one game of their choosing.

This was then repeated until somebody had five tatami mats worth of points, or 900 points. This meant that they would obtain control of the room.
This was how they would fight after they had signed the Corona Convention.
At the current moment, Yurika was the only one who was losing, with her points dropping below 160.
The other four people were maintaining their points around the 180 level.
Theia would violate Yurika's territory because of this.
At this rate, Yurika was sure to be driven out of the house.
As such, they were of course planning on playing five games today as well. However, the games showed no signs of starting, despite everyone having gathered by the tea table.



"Kiriha-san, what's the matter with Yurika?"
"Well, it seems like she had lost two days' worth of food."
"So that's why she's acting like that..."
Koutarou and the rest had not started up the games because of Yurika.
"Ahahaha♪ Ufufufu♪ Fight~♪ Yurika Fight~♪ I love cup noodles♪"
Yurika, with a spaced out look on her face, laughed and sang some odd lyrics.
When Koutarou and Sanae returned from Koutarou's part time job, Yurika was already in that state.
They couldn't let Yurika play games in her current state, so they cancelled their plans for today.
"So, what is she grasping?"
"It's a fragment of one of those cup noodles. It seems everything but that fragment had gone to waste."
"Fight~♪ Yurika Fight~♪ I am a magical girl~♪"
"Satomi-sama, actually, I was the one who mistook Yurika's food for garbage and threw it away."
Ruth's expression clouded as she looked at the miserable Yurika while explaining the situation to Koutarou.
"They were gathered next to broken cups and dust, so I was certain it was garbage..."
Ruth, who felt she was responsible for the incident, showed an apologetic expression.
"I see... Alright."
Hearing her explanation, Koutarou quickly decided what to do.
If it had just been Yurika, he would have hesitated, but if Ruth was involved the situation was a little different.
He was planning on solving the situation immediately.
"What will you do?"

“Well, just wait and see… Hey, Yurika.”
“I believe in love and courage~♪ The most important thing is life and bonds~♪ I love everyone~♪ Lots of food~♪ L-Lots of… food…”
“Owa!?”
“Uuuuuu…”
However, Yurika wasn’t listening to Koutarou at all. Instead, she began to cry.
She had depressed herself with the lyrics of the song she was singing herself.
Lots of food.
To her, that lyric was just too sad.
“Now that I’ve decided…”
Although he had jumped back in surprise when Yurika started to cry, Koutarou had no intention of leaving Yurika as she was.
He approached her again and stole the fragment inside of her hand.
“Aaah!? Give it back! Please give it back! That’s the only food I have until the end of tomorrow!”
Because of that, Yurika finally noticed Koutarou.
Having had her last piece of food stolen, she began panicking.
“Hey Yurika, don’t you want to eat some normal food instead of this?”
“Eh…?”
Because of Koutarou’s words, Yurika stopped moving and her stomach began growling.
Her stomach was being honest.
“T-That would be a dream come true, b-but you’re not planning on demanding me to hand over several points in return, are you!?”
“I would love to, but this isn’t just about you, so I’ll overlook it for these next two days.”
“I-Is it really alright!?”
“Satomi-sama! Thank you very much!”
Yurika and Ruth smiled.
“Oooooh, Satomi-san I knew you were a good person from the moment we first met!”
“Don’t make me laugh…”
Yurika began crying tears of joy as she grabbed a hold of Koutarou’s hands and began shaking them.
Looking at Yurika’s behavior, Sanae who was clinging onto Koutarou’s back sighed.
The day they had first met she called Koutarou a horrible person and a bully.
However, even I didn’t think it would end up like this back then…
While Sanae was thinking that, she slightly strengthened her grip on Koutarou.
“Thank you very much for looking out for us, Satomi-sama.”
“Ahaha, I’d rather feed Yurika for two days than watch you walk around with that gloomy face.”
People don’t die over not eating for two days; it sounded more like a tough diet.
However, since Ruth was wearing such a gloomy expression, Koutarou couldn’t just overlook it.
“Oh….Thank you very much, Satomi-sama…”
Ruth smiled while slightly blushing and bowed deeply.
Being thanked so honestly by Ruth, Koutarou had a somewhat ticklish and happy feeling.

“Please raise your head Ruth-san. It’s really not that big of a deal.”
“However, it doesn’t matter if it’s a big deal or not if it is enough for people to survive, Satomi-sama.”
“…Hey, pleb.”
At that moment, Theia’s sharp glance pierced through Koutarou.
“W-What is it now all of a sudden?”
“It was the same this morning, but what is with this difference in behavior between me and Ruth? It’s like you’re saying you’re fine with giving your allegiance to her!”
Theia, frustrated, bit her lip and puffed up her cheeks as she glared at Koutarou.
To strangers, Theia might look cute, but she was seriously upset.
“Geez, I was wondering what you’d say but…”
“What!? Then give me a satisfying explanation!!”
Theia just grew angrier as Koutarou exaggeratedly sighed.
Koutarou ignored the screams and pointed at Sanae, Theia, Yurika, and Kiriha in order.
“A weird person, a weird person, an extremely weird person, and a weird person. There are four strange people in this room. It’s obvious to want to treat the only other normal person here with care!”
“What kind of gibberish is that? Why am I a strange person!? I am your master!”
“Who are you calling master!? Don’t you understand the hardships Ruth-san has to endure!?”
“T-They’re not hardships…”
“Just listen, pleb! Ruth is saying that there are no hardships!”
“A proper person like Ruth can’t just spell out that she’s suffering right in front of the person she’s suffering for!”
“I’m not suffering any hardships! It’s true!”
Koutarou and Theia were making a fuss with Ruth by the side, oddly enough starting to panic.
Her behavior was all that was needed to be said about how she felt, but Koutarou and Theia were too busy arguing to notice.
“Hmph, it doesn’t matter. No matter what you think, as long as I gain control of this room I will gain control of you!”
“Like it’ll be that simple!”
“I’ll make it simple! That’s the power of royalty!”
“I’ll fend you right off!”
As Koutarou and Theia were staring at each other, Kiriha, who had kept quiet all this time, opened her mouth.
“About that, Koutarou. We have a proposal.”
“…A proposal?”
As he calmed down slightly, Koutarou looked towards Kiriha.
“That’s right. You and I both have plenty of will to fight; however, just playing card games every day is dulling our will. With that in mind, we have an idea of a different kind of match. Of course, the amount of points played for will be higher.”
“What do you mean?”

“Well, there’s an obstacle marathon for clubs in the upcoming sports festival, right? We will take part in that and compete using that. Just playing card games every day gets stale, doesn’t it?”
Kiriha began explaining and Theia continued it. Theia had calmed down and was now back to normal.
I only need to win this race and show the plebeian my superiority.
That was what Theia was planning on.
“That sounds interesting. The tension will rise with that kind of special match as well. I agree.”
Koutarou quickly agreed to the proposal.
Koutarou, who had been the star during the previous sport events, had no reason to refuse.
Fufufu, I’ll make you regret challenging me to a sports match, Tulip…
Koutarou showed a confident and fearless smile.
“I agree as well.”
Yurika, who would normally complain about matters being resolved without her, obediently agreed.
With two days’ worth of food on the line, she agreed with Koutarou.
“Wait just a minute. What about me? I can’t take part in the sports festival.”
However, that was when the ghost, Sanae, spoke up; she was unable to take part in this match.
“It’s all right. We have already taken you into account. You will pick one of us beforehand and get the same rank as that person.”
“Pick beforehand? What do you mean?”
“Well for example, say you pick me.”
“I absolutely refuse!”
“Well just wait, Sanae, this is just an example. Say I get second place. In that case, you too would get second place. It will be as if two people got second place.”
Which meant that third place would be fourth, fifth would be sixth.
Simply put, Sanae would get the same rank as the one she chose.
“I see. We would be in the same boat.”
“That’s right. Although with this method, your abilities will have no say in the matter, and you will be at a slight disadvantage. That is why if you don’t choose anyone you will get third place. Feel free to choose the way that works best for you.”
Because there were five people, the person in third place wouldn’t lose any points. In other words, Sanae could choose not to take part in the match.
“Hmm…”
While still hanging on to Koutarou’s back, Sanae put one hand on her cheek and pondered.
“I can’t just not participate, that would be too boring…”
Sanae looked at Kiriha, Theia, and Yurika in order and finally looked at Koutarou in front of her.
And after looking at the side of Koutarou’s face for a while she smiled brightly.
“Alright, I’ve decided! I’ll be in the same boat as Koutarou!”
“Hm? Are you okay with me?”
“Even though there might be obstacles, in the end it’s a marathon, right? You look like you have the most stamina. Besides, we have a truce, right?”
“I see. I’ll make sure you don’t regret choosing me, Sanae!”

“Nyahaha, I’m counting on you.”
Sanae smiled and nodded at Koutarou, and put her arms back around Koutarou’s neck.
“Alright, with that it’s been decided! As a special match, we are taking part in the obstacle marathon for clubs!”
And just like that, Koutarou and the rest would have a special match during an event at the sports festival.

A Day for the Invaders

Part 1

Monday, April 27th

Over half a month had passed since the four invaders forced their way into Room 106.

During that time, they had fought over the room primarily using card games with points going back and forth. However, Koutarou didn't believe that games alone would be enough to solve his problems.

He was using every cell in his not-so-clever head to come up with countermeasures.

That was why he was visiting Kitsushouharukaze High School's cosplay club.

Of course, his goal was to deal with the invaders.

"...And like that, she's just cosplaying without taking into account her situation or place. That's why I'd like you to teach her the true meaning of cosplay."

Koutarou was sitting down by a conference table and talking to six girls.

Those six were the Cosplay Society's club president and their five members.

The Cosplay Society only had girls and, like the Knitting Society, they were a weak club.

Having visited the Cosplay Society, Koutarou was in the middle of explaining his situation.

That he had an acquaintance who was a cosplayer.

And that this cosplayer was cosplaying regardless of time, place and occasion.

"And this is a photo of the cosplayer in question."

Having explained most of the situation, Koutarou pulled out a photograph and put it on top of the table.

The club president, who was sitting on the opposite of the end of the table, picked up the photograph.

"I see. So this girl is..."

The photograph showed Yurika in her magical girl outfit.

"What a cute girl. Is the outfit an original magical girl?"

"The quality of her outfit seems to be pretty high."

"I wonder, is it custom made? Either way, it must have cost quite a bit..."

"Look at the cane! It's of really high quality!"

"It seems she's at least got the resolution."

The members of the society peeked at the photograph and stated their impressions.

"If we just leave her like this she will eventually cause problems for all of you. If she walks around in this outfit around here, people would suspect it's one of you."

"Yes, that's what they would think..."

As the club president responded to Koutarou she looked down.

Koutarou noticed her shoulders were trembling slightly.

Not good, did I make her angry?

It was a given that Yurika would cause problems for this club sooner or later.

"What will you do?"

"President!"

The other members noticed their president's behavior and looked at her anxiously.

“So how about it, will you do it?”
As Koutarou said that, a tear streamed down from her face and fell.
The teardrop fell on Yurika’s photograph, distorting the outline.
Seeing that, Koutarou thought this negotiation had ended in a failure.
“Fu, fufufu, fufufufu…”
The president’s shoulders trembled as she began laughing in a small voice.
And her laugh gradually grew louder.
“Ahahahaha!”
And as the president looked up, she revealed a large smile.
“How could this be!?”
“…?”
The president was crying as she laughed.
Koutarou didn’t understand the meaning behind her actions, and he looked puzzled at her smile.
“President, what about his request!?”
“Marvelous! Absolutely marvelous! Today is a wonderful day!”
The president excitedly slammed her hands down onto the table and kicked her chair away as she stood up.
“So you will accept it!?”
“Of course! This is love, a deep, deep love! Satomi-kun couldn’t have made this request without understanding the behavior of cosplayers and holding a deep love for it!”
“In that case, President!”
“You all understand, right!? If we don’t respond to Satomi-kun’s deep love, how can we call ourselves cosplayers! Let’s combine our powers and turn this girl, Yurika-san, into a first rate cosplayer!!”
“Yes!”
“CosCluuub![1]”
“Fight!”
The five club members responded to the president in choir.
All of the members of the cosplay society were completely motivated.
“Uhmm…”
Having been taken aback by the unexpected development, Koutarou was finally able to regain his composure.
“…In other words, you’ll do it?”
“Ah, S-Sorry Satomi-kun, we were getting a bit to heated up…”
The president’s cheeks turned red with embarrassment.
“I don’t know if it was just a fad, but a shadow has been cast on the cosplay boom lately… On top of that, we have to endure the prejudice and harassment of heartless people… That’s why we were just so happy that a normal person like you showed your understanding…”
The president’s face was beet red.

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1 An abbreviation of Cosplay Club

The other members were in a similar state, some scratched their nose and others scratched their head; they were showing their embarrassment in one way or another.
They were all looking at Koutarou in a friendly manner.
I see, they've been having a hard time too…
Koutarou felt sympathy for the girls.
The Knitting Society and the Cosplay Society were similar in the sense that they were both isolated.
"Thank you very much, everybody. I won't forget this debt. If you ever have problems with something, please let me know."
He had come there as a countermeasure for the invaders, but his feelings of using them had disappeared.
He just thought that it was a good idea to consult with them ahead of time.
It would have been too late after Yurika had caused problems for them.
"In that case, can I ask something of you, Satomi-kun?"
"Yes, what can I help you with?"
"Well… Could you stop by and play from time to time?
The president put her hands together and had an apologetic look on her face.
"I don't mind, but… Why?"
"W-Well you see… Our club only has girls in it, right?"
The president pointed at the club members on her side with both of her hands.
"We'd like to hear a boy's thoughts on designs… But it's hard to ask a normal boy… It's easier to ask a person like Satomi-kun who doesn't have any underlying thoughts or prejudice…"
The president's voice gradually turned lower and lower.
And in the end the voice vanished and the president looked at Koutarou with an uneasy glance.
"I understand. Since you listened to my request I have no reason not to listen to yours. I'd love to cooperate with you."
Hearing her explanation, Koutarou nodded his head.
Since he was asking them to help with Yurika, this seemed like a fair deal to him.
"Thank you, Satomi-kun!"
"Then let's get to it right away, President!"
"Eh, now!?"
"Of course, Satomi-kun! It won't take a lot of time!"
Hearing Koutarou's response, the girls jumped into action right away.
They took the outfits from the hangers and ran around the room.
They looked like they were having a lot of fun.
Well, alright then.
Koutarou, who had been taken aback momentarily, quickly recollected himself and relaxed as he fixed his posture in the chair.

Part 2

"Well then, I'll take my leave now."
"Thank you, Satomi-kun. Leave Yurika-san to us!"
"Please come visit again, Satomi-kuuun!"
"That's wrong!"
"Oh, right!"
"All together now..."
"Farewell Master! We'll be waiting for your return!"
"Ahaha, well then, see you later."
Koutarou left the club room as he was seen off by the Cosplay Society's smiles and voices.
The windowless hallway was dim and chilly, the complete opposite of the Cosplay Society's club room.
"However, they sure are great. Cosplaying should be disciplined like that."
The girls of the cosplay society would not change places without permission whilst cosplaying.
They wouldn't enter the hallway while still wearing their outfit.
Even when going to the toilet, they would make sure to take off their outfit first.
"I absolutely agree."
And all of a sudden Sanae, who had kept quiet in order not to disturb Koutarou, opened her mouth.
She was hanging onto Koutarou's back with her arms around his neck, and she poked his cheeks.
"But aren't you a sly one, trying to pawn off Yurika to the Cosplay Society."
"That was my plan at first. But after talking to them, I felt like it was a good idea talking to them."
"Give and take?"
"Something like that."
"...Isn't it just because you love maid outfits?"
"It's not! ...Well, I don't hate them though."
"If you say so... But with this, it looks like there'll be one less rival, right?"
"Kukuku, that makes one..."
Koutarou grinned and laughed.
If Yurika entered the Cosplay Society, she would no longer need Room 106 as a place to express herself.
That was Koutarou's goal.
Leaving the cosplay society aside, having one less invader to deal with was worth celebrating.
"...You really are sly, you know."
"Is that so?"
Koutarou and Sanae exited the club building as they were talking.
Just like that, the negotiation between Koutarou and the cosplay society peacefully ended.
Leaving the club building, they then headed back towards their classroom as the lunch break was about to end.
By the way, even though Sanae was floating in the air, none of the students made a commotion.
Only the residents of room 106 could see Sanae in the high school.

The only exception was Shizuka; she could see Sanae while she was at Corona House and if Sanae wasn't hiding her presence.
It looked to Kenji and Shizuka that only Koutarou had returned to the classroom since Sanae was hiding her presence.
"Welcome back, Satomi-kun."
"Where'd you go, Kou?"
"I had an errand to do at the club building."
"An errand?"
"Yeah, I went to one of the clubs and talked about Yurika."
"About Nijino-san? What kind of club was it?"
Having taken notice of the mention of Yurika, Kenji adjusted his classes and leaned in.
Kenji's contact with Yurika had recently increased since she sat next to him.
Kenji, who normally looked after others, couldn't simply let Yurika be. He felt it was dangerous to leave her on her own, even more so than Koutarou.
"I can't say, not even to you. It's about Yurika's personal hobby."
"Hmm… Well, that's fine. More importantly, Kou, where did you meet those four?"
"What four?"
"Don't try to play stupid. I'm talking about Nijino-san, Kurano-san, Ruth, and Theia."
"Ah, you're talking about them."
Koutarou wasn't trying to play stupid. Including Ruth, there were five invaders, so the mention of four just didn't click for him.
Kenji didn't know about Sanae's existence; it had been a simple misunderstanding.
"You were acquainted before they transferred, right?"
"Yeah, I met them when I had gone out shopping once."
"Shopping…?"
Kenji tilted his head. He usually spent a lot of time with Koutarou, but he didn't have any recollection of those four when he had been out shopping with him.
That's why Kenji felt something was odd with Koutarou's explanation.
"When was this sho ― "
"N-Nevertheless, those four girls sure stand out, don't they Mackenzie-kun?"
"Eh? Yeah, they do. I guess you could stay they're rich in variety…"
Having sensed where the conversation was heading, Shizuka, who knew about the circumstances, diverted Kenji's attention elsewhere.
Kenji didn't have the will to pursue it either and obediently responded to Shizuka's change in topic.
"Phew…"
That was close. Thank you, Landlord-san.
As Kenji's attention shifted towards Shizuka, Koutarou let out a sigh of relief.
Shizuka smiled as her and Koutarou's eyes met.
In the present situation, Shizuka was one of Koutarou's few allies, and she would give him a hand every now and then.

“Mackenzie-kun, which one of those four would be your type?”
“Me!?”
“Yeah, I’m kind of interested.”
“For Mackenzie, it’s that girl in the drama club, right? You even joined the drama club to chase after her.”
“You’re wrong. I was asked by an acquaintance to join to even the numbers.”
Kenji sighed at Koutarou’s comment.
It had already been brought up several times before.
“Then tell me, Mackenzie-kun! My friends are always asking who your type is!”
“Hmm… Out of those four…”
Kenji looked over at the four girls.
Koutarou naturally looked over as well.
Apart from Sanae, the four invaders were grouped up and chatting.
There were several students there apart from the four, and the invaders were actively chatting with them.
When they had first arrived they stood out, but now they had blended in and were a part of the class.
“Are you dating someone, Kurano-san?”
“Would you leave it alone? You boys only care about that…”
“Aren’t you interested as well?”
“T-That’s…”
“Fufufu, I don’t mind. I don’t have anyone I am currently seeing.”
“Alright! Me! Me! I’ll volunteer!”
“You idiot…”
“But there is someone I have chosen”.
“What, really!? Who!?”
“Ahaha, that’s a secret.”
Kiriha was known as the class’s honor student.
Kiriha would act completely different from her normal self.
She was active, had a quick mind, and was kind to everyone. Because of that, she attracted a lot of people to her.
In reality, the majority of the students around the invaders were Kiriha’s friends and acquaintances.
She had put on quite the act, but to Koutarou, who knew her true self, he couldn’t help but feel they were pitiful.
“Ah, only five minutes left! I still have six problems left; I won’t make it! Um… Eh…! Fueeee!”
“Yurika-san, do you want me to show you my homework again?”
“Is that okay!?”
“If you’ll buy me juice.”
“…That’s fine, I’ll solve them myself…”
Compared to Kiriha, Yurika was known to be useless.
She was unable to remain calm and had a suspicious behavior. She failed a lot and was often late.

Forgetting her homework was an everyday occurrence, and even now she was desperately working away at her math homework.

Yurika and Kiriha could often be found together; this only enhanced her uselessness.

However, the person in question didn't realize this at all.

"I'm not fond of rock."

"Then what do you listen to, Theia-chan?"

"Normally classical music. Although I'm interested in enka[1]. Last year's big hit 'The Festival's Flame Drum' utterly impressed me."

"That was a huge hit in the enka world, wasn't it?"

"So cool... As expected from a princess..."

The most conspicuous of the four was Theia.

Unlike Kiriha, Theia was simply acting like herself.

However, she couldn't just call herself an alien princess, so she had changed her background to an international student from Europe.

She said she was a princess from a country where monarchy still remained.

The translation machine she used had the ability to augment the topic, so she suffered no real problems in her conversations.

Thanks to that, she had been accepted into the class as a princess.

"So, does Ruth-chan make your lunch as well?"

"Yes. But I'm still studying the kind of food that the citizens of this country eat."

"That's nice. I wish I could cook..."

"You're envious, aren't you? Ruth is my childhood friend. Right?"

"Yes."

Compared to the other three who were all unique, Ruth lacked impact.

She didn't speak out of line, and apart from her fitness she had no real flaws.

She was always in the background, smiling next to Theia.

However, many were quite attracted to her moderate personality and she was secretly quite popular.

Although she didn't compare to the other four, she still stood out.

"Hmm..."

"Don't act like you're wondering, Mackenzie. Out of those four you'd pick Yurika."

Koutarou smiled and called out to Kenji as he was thinking.

"Don't just decide on your own!"

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1 A Japanese music genre; a form of sentimental balladry that shares some resemblance to blues.

“Nooo, I’m right. You’ve always been like that. You always get attracted to the girls who are too dangerous to leave on their own.”
“Ahaha, is that so Mackenzie-kun?”
“It’s not, Kasagi-san. Kou’s just getting ahead of himself.”
Kenji hurriedly denied it.
“Then who is it?”
“…”
However, as Koutarou pursued the question even further Kenji fell silent.
Yurika was most likely his type out of the four.
“See. It is Yurika!”
“You’re wrong! It just happened to be her!”
“Now that you mention it, Satomi-kun is too dangerous to leave on his own. It really is your type, isn’t it?”
“Please don’t say something so terrifying, Kasagi-san!”
“There’s no need to be embarrassed~”
“You just shut up! It’s not like that, Kasagi-san…”
After scolding Koutarou, Kenji began to desperately explain himself to Shizuka.
At that point Sanae, who had been floating in the air nearby, started hanging off of Koutarou’s back.
“Hey Koutarou, what about you?”
“Hm?”
“Which of us five would be your type?”
Sanae hung onto Koutarou and whispered into his ear.
And Koutarou whispered back to her.
“…You don’t even need to ask in this situation.”
“You mean it’s me!? I’m always with you and I’m innocent, full of energy, and brave. The beautiful ghost Sanae-chan!?”
Sanae’s eyes sparked with anticipation.
However, Koutarou shook his head.
“Of course not. It’s Ruth-san. Among the five of you it’s not even a contest.”
To Koutarou, who was struggling daily, his only choice was Ruth, who didn’t take part in the fighting.
“Don’t kid around! I’m obviously the cutest!”
“Gueh!”
Sanae strengthened the grip around Koutarou’s neck and choked him.
“I’m always right next to you! Can’t you say something like in love comedies like your heart is always throbbing and that you think I’m cute!?”
“N-No, I don’t really feel anything…”
“I’m even cheering for you in the sports festival!!”
In her excitement, Sanae tightened her grip around Koutarou’s neck even more.
“I-In the end you want to chase me out of the room anyways…”
“Even then I think it’s unfair!”

With the pressure to his neck, Koutarou felt like he was about to pass out, but to others it seemed like Koutarou was just sitting down on his chair.
It wasn't just the four invaders, but Koutarou's and Sanae's odd relationship was also already a part of the class.

Part 3

After school, Kiriha had gone to the club building on her own.
"In order to take part in the obstacle marathon for clubs I'll need to join a club as well, but…"
Her goal was of course to take part in the sports festival next month.
The event they were going to take part in was called the Obstacle Marathon for Clubs.
And as the name suggested, two representatives from a club would take part and compete in a group.
Because of that, they needed to join a club and be chosen as one of the representatives.
"Now then… What club should I join…"
Kiriha stood at the entrance of the club building looking at a bulletin board.
There was a list of clubs on it.
Kiriha was staring at that list and thinking out her strategies for the marathon.
Since there are two people taking part, if I get into some trouble my partner needs to be quite capable. In which case, the first thing required are fast legs. Since it is a marathon, picking a sports club is inevitable. Relying on a liberal club member's leg is foolish. And since it's an obstacle race, having a small body would be favorable. The first club that comes to mind is…
As Kiriha gathered her thoughts, a single club's name popped into her view.
"The girl's track and field team."
A smile appeared on Kiriha's face as she said its name.
The girl's track and field team… not bad. Now all that remains to be seen is if I'll be chosen as one of the representatives. I'll try to explain my situation. If it's no good I'll just head to a different club. I still have time left…
"Karama, Korama, you're here, aren't you?"
"We're here-ho!"
"Of course-ho!"
The only one here was Kiriha, but her servant haniwas' voices could be heard coming out of thin air.
They had been secretly following Kiriha around using built-in defense devices that hid their bodies.
"Record conversations at the place I'm heading towards. I need to analyze everyone's character and their relationships, so the more conversations you record the better."
"Understood-ho!"
"We'll do our best-ho!"
Kiriha was planning on forcing her way into the girl's track and field team like she had done with Koutarou.
She would examine the characters of the club members and skillfully lead them into selecting her as a representative for the obstacle marathon.
"Alright."

Kiriha nodded to the haniwas and headed for the entrance of the club building.
“Nooooo!! I won’t join the cosplay club!! I keep telling you it’s not cosplay!!”
“This girl is struggling more than I thought she would…”
“This is for Satomi-kun’s sake. Don’t mind that and bring her in!”
“Roger!”
“Noooooooooo!”
As Kiriha was passing through the entrance she crossed paths with an odd group. However she paid no attention to them.
Her current concern right now was to get the girl’s track and field team to choose her as their representative.
“Fufufu, I wonder how the others will manage…”
Kiriha smiled confidently and headed for the track and field club room, taking the two haniwas with her.
As Kiriha was trying to join the track and field team, another invader was trying to join a certain club.
“So she’s joining the girl’s track and field team…”
“Yes. She was confirmed to have entered their club room.”
“Good work, Ruth. Keep up the observation.”
“Understood.”
With a beep, Ruth’s voice that was coming out of Theia’s bracelet was cut off.
Theia’s bracelet, which was attached to her right arm, had several functions aside from calling out weapons.
Communication was one of those functions; she was able to communicate with Ruth’s bracelet whenever she wished.
After receiving the report from Ruth, Theia put both of her hands on her waist.
“Kukuku, so Kiriha is joining the girl’s track and field team… That would be the proper way to go about things… However!”
Theia opened her eyes and looked up at the building in front of her.
As she was doing that it seemed like it was a rather large building. However, in reality it was simply because of her small size.
“A competition is all about organizational strength and combined force! I’ll just leave physical strength to the men! You chose the wrong club, people of the earth! Kukuku!”
The building in front of her was also a club building, but it was different from the common club building.
It was a prefabricated hut the men’s cheerleading squad was using.
Because they made a lot of noise when they practiced, they were in a separate building.
“What I seek is complete unity and utter loyalty! I’ll have you die for my sake, men’s cheerleading squad!”
“Go! Go! Ha-ru-ka-ze!”
“Go, Go, Harukaze! Go, Go, Harukaze!”

As Theia was laughing loudly, the men's loud voices along with an intense drumbeat leaked out from the prefabricated hut, shaking the ground.
"Good, very good! Fitting for my troops! Prepare yourselves!"
"Go, Go, Harukaze! Go, Go, Harukaze!"
Loud voices and drums roared; it seemed like it would have been enough to blow away Theia's tiny body.
However, that did not intimidate Theia, and she walked up to the door with a determined glance and knocked on the door.
"Greetings!"
"What is it? We're busy practicing. If you have any business with us, come back later."
Shortly after Theia had knocked, the door opened and a man with a rough looking face appeared.
The uniform he was wearing was of a more classic style.
The hems of his coat and pants were longer and had lots of embroidery.
He had an armband attached around his left arm and had 'head' written on it. He was this club's leader.
And the most noteworthy thing about him was his gigantic figure.
He looked like he would get caught in the door's frame, and when compared to Theia, he looked like a giant.
"That won't happen. From today on I will be this club's ruler!"
Even then, Theia's smile didn't waver.
Her confident smile was very fitting for that of a ruler.
And Theia pointed at the face of the giant man in front of her.
"Hand over ownership of the cheerleader squad to me right away and have all of the members obey my every command!"
"What!? Do you think you can hurt the glory of our squad with that tiny body of yours!?"
"That's the spirit! However, current head, I won't let you get off easily! I'll properly discipline you and make you regret calling your master tiny!"
"Rubbish! Don't get ahead of yourself shrimp! Men, to arms! Don't hold back even if it's a tiny girl, she is ridiculing our squad!"
Being called out by their head the members inside streamed out of the club room.
They were all huge, and as they surrounded Theia, she could no longer be seen from the outside.
"Very good! That's the behavior I expect from my vassals!"
"Cut the banter!"
"Don't think you'll be able to get out of this alive!"
The squad members flew into a fit of rage and threatened Theia.
It was almost like a pack of fierce animals hunting a rabbit.
"Of course I'll get out of this alive! That is what you call victory! … Prepare for the seventh princess of the Holy Galactic Forthorthe Empire, Theiamillis Gre Forthorthe!!
However, here the fiercest animal was the tiny rabbit.

Part 4

Roughly an hour later.
Theia's figure could be seen inside of the prefabricated hut.
She calmly sat down on an elegant chair in the back of the building.
And she had the head's armband on her left arm.
In addition, there was originally a Kitsushouharukaze High School flag behind her, but that had now been replaced with a flag that had the same crest as her bracelet.
It was the crest of the Forthorthe empire.
The cheerleading squad had lined up in front of Theia.
Strangely enough, they all had various wounds of differing sizes.
Bruises and sprains aside, they had burns, blue bruises, and some even had scorched hair.
However, the men with iron will were not the type to cry about that, and they stood with a straight posture and confidence.
The ten men wearing black uniforms left quite an impression.
They were lined up in a military fashion.
The only exception was the person who had been the head an hour ago; he had been roughed up and was now lying in the corner of the room.
"Noooooo, I don't want to wear that and take part in the sports festival! Please forgive me!"
"Just give up, Yurika-chan!"
Voices from the outside could be heard, but the men inside didn't pay any attention to them.
Theia did the same and she gave a satisfied smile as she watched the squad members lining up in an orderly fashion as she stood up.
She put both of her hands on her waist as she declared in a dignified manner.
"Listen up, from this point on the cheerleading squad will be reborn! You won't be cheering for something as vague as a school, from this point on you are the royal cheerleading squad, and you will only cheer for me! This is the first time in the long history of the Forthorthe empire that royalty has ever had an immediate cheering squad! I want you to be fully aware of that importance and pour your heart and soul into it!"
"Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess!"
In response to Theia's declaration, the ten men roared.
Their powerful voices that had gone through daily training shook the prefabricated hut.
However, that could no longer be called cheering but more of a proof of loyalty to Theia.

“Boast and praise my noble name! Defeat is not permitted in Forthorthe! Don’t forget, Forthorthe is a synonym of victory!”
“Victory for her highness Theiamillis! Glory to the Forthorthe royal family!”
Theia had seized the cheerleading squad through military force.
Kiriha’s way of gradually taking control didn’t suit Theia.
As Theia took over as leader of the cheerleading squad, she radically changed its structure; she made it a cheerleading squad that existed only for her sake.
She was going to take on the sports festival with this reformed cheerleading squad.
“Fight the enemies of the royal family! Bleed for my sake! Complete discipline and trust in your companions, and finally utter loyalty to me will lead us to victory!!”
“Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess!”
“Kukuku, what will you do now pleb!? Now that I have obtained an invincible army!”
The excited Theia was thinking of Koutarou.
Just you watch, pleb. I’ll show you how powerful loyalty and unity can be!
Theia had not noticed yet.
That part of the reason for why she had taken over the cheerleading squad was to get back at Koutarou who would not swear his loyalty to her.

Part 5

Koutarou was in the Knitting Society’s club room.
He wasn’t even aware of Theia and Kiriha’s progress in their invasions.
In fact, he had completely forgotten about his normally chaotic life.
When he was knitting together with Harumi after school, he had a strange sense of fulfillment, similar to when he was sleeping.
“Satomi-kun, you’ve gotten better.”
“Really?”
“Yes. You no longer have any hesitation when you’re knitting.”
“Hahaha, I’ve just used the same method since I started. I guess I’m bound to get less clumsy.”
Koutarou, who had been unaware of his progress, only noticed when Harumi mentioned it.
As she had said, he was no longer hesitating in the procedure.
It’s gradually getting longer…
Koutarou stopped moving his needles and looked at his progress for the day.
It was already over 30 centimeters long, and if he kept it up at this rate he’d have completed a muffler shortly.
This part here is pretty poorly done…
The part at the start was a mess.
It would bend here or there and the finish was uneven.
And by 10 and 20 centimeters the quality gradually increased.
He was still no match for Harumi, but there was a big difference between when he had started and now.

Now that I look at it, I really have gotten better.
Since one can tell the quality of knitting just by looking at it, Koutarou was able to get a good feel of his improvement.
"…You sure are giving it your all, Satomi-kun."
"Eh?"
As Koutarou looked up he saw Harumi staring at his work.
"Looking at your knitting, I can tell."
Harumi slowly and gently patted Koutarou's work.
"You must really love knitting, Senpai."
Harumi was gently touching the knitting with the tip of her fingers.
Seeing that, Koutarou understood just how much Harumi loved knitting.
Harumi blushed slightly and turned her face down when Koutarou pointed that out.
"Yes. I love it. That's why… You know… when Satomi-kun is working so earnestly, it makes me really happy…"
"In that case, I have to live up to your expectations."
Koutarou smiled at Harumi and began moving his needles again.
He had started to enjoy knitting, even when he left out the reason for why he started with it in the first place.
Even more so now that he knew that he was improving.
"N-No, there's no need to be in such a hurry… Let's talk some mo—"
"Yes?"
"I-It's nothing, nothing at all!"
When Koutarou looked back up, Harumi's face was for some reason dyed red and she began to move her needles haphazardly.
Harumi's pattern was rough and uneven, and Koutarou couldn't see any of her normal calmness when knitting.
I wonder why…
Having stopped moving his own knitting needles, Koutarou looked at Harumi and tilted his head.
And after doing that, Harumi's face turned even redder and her pattern got even rougher.
"Please stop taking my clothes off! I can change clothes myself!"
"It'll be alright, just relax!"
"Stop fooling around and take this seriously. This is so we can measure you for the outfit you'll be wearing for the sports festival's obstacle marathon!"
"I don't want toooo!!"
Ah, I completely forgot!
Hearing the voices coming from the outside, Koutarou remembered something he had forgotten, and he called out to Harumi.
"By the way, Senpai, I have something I'd like to ask."
"Y-Yes!"
Harumi straightened her posture as if she had been startled.

And while Koutarou found it strange, he continued talking.
“Would you mind participating with me in the upcoming obstacle marathon for clubs?”
“In the obstacle marathon…?”
As she repeated his words she returned to her normal self.
Shortly thereafter, she furrowed her brow and showed a sad expression.
“But, I’m not good with sports so… I’ll probably just get in your way…”
“That’s fine, it doesn’t matter.”
Koutarou shook his head.
“I made a bet with some friends about that race. The first one to reach the goal gets to order the others around. But that event requires groups of two, so I can’t just enter it on my own.”
“With your friends…”
“Besides, even though you start as a group, only the best result is kept. So if you retire right after the race has started I won’t mind; all I need is for you to participate.”
The obstacle marathon for clubs required two representatives from every participating club.
However, out of those two, only the one with the better position would be recorded.
In other words, if Koutarou tried to enter alone, he’d be refused, and even if Harumi retired at the start it wouldn’t cause a problem.
“Now that you mention it, that was one of the rules… I understand. If that’s how it is I’ll gladly accompany you.”
“Thank you very much, Senpai!”
“No, this is nothing.”
In the end, Harumi accepted Koutarou’s request with a smile.
Harumi was only hesitating because she would have just held Koutarou back. With that not being the case, she had no problems with retiring from the race.
Koutarou and Sanae didn’t leave Harukaze High School until 4:30 in the evening.
“But the Knitting Society’s members and activities sure are plain~”
“Just leave it.”
However, this was very early for club activities to stop for the day.
That was because Harumi had to go to the hospital today.
Whenever Harumi would go to the hospital, they would either end it early or they wouldn’t have any club activities at all that day.
“But is it really okay to group up with that weak-looking girl? If you retire we’ll get last place, you know.”
“It’ll be fine as long as I win. Fufufu. Fortunately, I used to be a star during sports festivals.”
“I’m starting to get real uneasy all of a sudden…”
The two were joking around as they passed under the front gate.
Other people couldn’t see Sanae, so when Koutarou got to crowded places he would fall silent.
And as Koutarou passed under the front gate, he didn’t say a word.
Sanae also understood that and she didn’t really seem to mind, and once they got passed the crowded area they began talking again.

"...Don't play around, Koutarou. I'm in the same boat as you this time."
"Just leave it to me!"
"I'm starting to get worried..."
"Just wait and see. I'm going to start practicing tomorrow, so don't get surprised by my capabilities, Sanae!"
"I hope that's the case..."
"..."
At that point Koutarou stopped talking.
It wasn't because there were any people nearby.
Koutarou was just normally walking along the fence around the schoolyard.
When Sanae followed his glance, she found that he was staring into the schoolyard.
"What are you looking at?"
"Hm? Oh, just something."
Koutarou was looking at the baseball club, which was in the middle of practicing.
The field was equipped with lighting during the night, so they would be continuing for a while.
Their practice had just started.
"The baseball club, huh... you were in a baseball club too, weren't you?"
"Hm? Yeah. I was in the baseball club up until I graduated from middle school."
"You have lots of stuff like that in the room, too."
Sanae remembered the day she had met Koutarou.
At that point, there were baseballs, bats and gloves lying around.
She had also been chased around by Koutarou, who was wielding a bat.
"Right now I'm just loyal to the Knitting Society."
"That's because that senpai is your type!"
"More so than you guys."
"What's with that~ There's no need to put it like that, right~"
Sanae puffed up her cheeks in response to Koutarou's retort.
Koutarou smiled wryly as he looked at her, and just before he was about to say something he quickly turned to look behind him.
"Eh?"
"What? What's wrong?"
Because of Koutarou's sudden behavior, Sanae was taken aback, and her puffed-up cheeks returned to their normal size.
"I just had a feeling someone was watching..."
"There's nobody here."
"Must've just been my imagination..."
"Well, aren't you self-conscious. Not good, that's what they call the start of becoming a narcissist!"
"Don't group me up with Mackenzie."
"Eh? Is that glasses-kun a narcissist?"
"Yeah. Enough to join the drama club."

“Hmm… So he’s just like what he looks, then.”
“Right?”
For better or worse, Sanae had forgotten the dissatisfaction she had felt earlier.
Neither of them was aware of that as their peaceful conversation continued.
“Either way, maybe it was someone who would be glad to see me?”
“…Unexpectedly enough, I don’t think so.”
“Hm? What was that?”
“It’s nothing~ Stop paying attention to strange things and just keep walking.”
“Fine, fine.”
And after the two of them had passed several intersections, a shadow came staggering out from a nearby alley.
“S-Satomi-saaan…”
The one approaching them was none other than Yurika.
“Yurika!?”
“What happened to you!?”
Yurika’s appearance was strange.
She had an exhausted expression, and there were signs that tears had been flowing from her eyes recently.
Her clothes were in disorder, her scarf was bent, buttons were buttoned incorrectly, and her underwear was peeping through; they were in an awful state.
“Help me please, Satomi-san. Some strange club is chasing me around and bothering me!”
Yurika grabbed onto Koutarou and looked up at him with tears in her eyes as she desperately appealed to him.
“They would strip me, measure me, put on weird outfits; I can’t take it anymore!”
“T-That sounds terrible.”
“I guess all clubs are desperate, aha, ahahaha…”
The club chasing after Yurika was of course the Cosplay Society that Koutarou talked to. However, they couldn’t just tell her that, so Koutarou and Sanae played it off with dry smiles.
“They said that they’ll measure my underwear tomorrow!! I don’t want to show my everything except to the person I love!”
“Aha, ahahaha!”
“Nyaha, nyahahaha!”
While Yurika was desperately explaining her situation, Koutarou and Sanae were desperately trying to play stupid.
So the one from before was her…
With the appearance of Yurika, Koutarou understood the glance he had felt a while back.
However unlike Koutarou, Yurika was in a situation she didn’t understand.

Practice and a Sense of Distance

Part 1

Friday, May 1st

As the month changed to May, a large amount of clubs in Kitsushouharukaze High School started practicing for the obstacle marathon.

There were originally plenty of clubs in the school, and the more powerful the club was the more influence it held inside of the school.

That was why events where clubs could compete against one another drew a lot of attention.

Because of that, there were plenty of people in the schoolyard, and various clubs could be found training.

The girl's track and field team that Kiriha had joined was one of those clubs.

They were in the middle of measuring their times in a 5 kilometer long distance race, in order to choose their representatives for the obstacle marathon.

"Hah, hah, hah..."

Kiriha was running on the track with proper form and breathing.

Her beautiful form and unwavering pace stood out, even in the track and field team; she had run from start to goal in the same condition.

However, Kiriha was currently in third place.

There were two girls running in front of her.

Kiriha was dexterous; however, due to the difference in training, she was lacking in stamina and experience, and her feminine body wasn't suited for long-distance races.

With that in mind, she was putting up quite a fight.

"Kiri-chan, keep it up~!"

"Hah, hah, hah..."

Being cheered by one the girls who had crossed the finished line before her, Kiriha ran through the goal, still in third place.

Following Kiriha, the girl's track and field team members crossed the finish line one after the other.

"You're quite fast, Kurano-san. It's hard to believe you're an inexperienced first year."

"Fufufu, don't compare my Kiri-chan with one of those normal first years!"

"T-Thank you very much. Fuh, fuh..."

After crossing the goal and while Kiriha was catching her breath, the two third years who had finished before her approached Kiriha.

"Why are you the one boasting?"

"Kiri-chan and I are bound together by fate; that's all I need!"

While Kiriha was breathing heavily, the two who had finished before her showed no signs of having issues breathing.

The two were marathon competitors to begin with, so five kilometers was nothing to them.

"But you're quite unfair, Kiri-chan... You're beautiful, have big breasts, you're smart and you're so fast!"

“B-But I can’t quite compare to you two, Senpai.”
“Kyaan, even your personality is beautiful!”
“Kya!?”
“Would you stop it, we’re being serious here…”
“Sorryyy, Kiri-chan.”
“N-No, it’s not…”
The high spirited third year was called Takahashi, and the serious one was called Kawashima.
That is what was written on their chests on their gym outfits.
By the way, Kawashima was also the girl’s track and field’s president.
“But, with this we have our representatives for the obstacle marathon.”
“Kiri-chan and I!”
“That’s right.”
“Eh, me?”
Though it went just as planned, Kiriha was slightly surprised.
“That’s right. Traditionally, we’ve always chosen the smartest one and the fittest one as representatives.”
“Which means, that it’s me and you Kiri-chan. Even my head is full of muscles after all.”
“Don’t brag about it, geez…”
Kawashima was amazed at Takahashi’s thoughtlessness, and Kiriha asked the two of them.
“By the way, Senpai. What kind of obstacles does the obstacle marathon have?”
“Kawa-chan, please explain.”
“Geez, you’re always like that…”
Kawashima shoulders dropped when Takahashi easily gave up on explaining.
And after sighing she began to explain.
“You see, Kurano-san, in total there are ten obstacles. In the past it’s been everything from who could eat curry the fastest to reading kanji, to standard sports festival obstacles. The obstacles change every year, so we don’t know what it’ll be this year. That’s why—”
“An idiot like me can’t win on her own. If an English or kanji[1] reading obstacle comes up, I wouldn’t stand a chance.”
“I keep telling you to stop bragging about it!”
“Tehehe, sorry~”
The obstacle marathon for clubs was a five kilometer long course with 10 obstacles along the way.
Which is why roughly every 400-500 meters, a new obstacle would appear.
The obstacles came in all different shapes and forms: some required physical strength, some required dexterity, and some required brains.
Shot put[2], spoon races, quizzes, and the like were popular obstacles.
And handicaps were placed depending on the success and failures of the obstacles. Just being fast wouldn’t be enough to win the race, and that’s what made this event so difficult.

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1 Characters used in the Japanese and Chinese writing system

2 An event where you throw a heavy spherical object as far as you can

The clubs had various strategies for the event, from sending out well balanced people to sending out a fast competitor to make up for their lack of brains.
The strategy the girl's track and field team used was to send the most fit and the smartest as a pair.
"I see, I understand."
"Let's give it our all, Kiri-chan!"
"Yes, let's, Takahashi-senpai."
"I'll leave it to you two."
Kiriha had a bright smile on her face, but secretly she was satisfied.
Everything went just as I had wanted it to…
Takahashi was the fastest in the club, and she was also quite small.
She matched perfectly with the partner that Kiriha had in mind.
All that's left is…
Kiriha signaled with her hand in an inconspicuous way.
"Ho, did you call for us, Ane-san-ho?"
"What is it-ho?"
The two haniwas, Karama and Korama, responded immediately.
They were using an advanced built-in stealth system to hide themselves as they followed Kiriha around.
"I've been chosen as a representative, according to plan. I want you two to focus on gathering information about any obstacles."
"Understood-ho!"
"We'll get to it right away-ho!"
"Take note of all people in the courtyard who are fitter than I am. And don't forget to take data regarding their physique as well."
"Ho, Leave it to us-ho"
"Ane-san can practice at ease-ho!"
"Good. And after you've done that, I want you to prepare some funds. We still have the gold I was planning on handing over to Koutarou, right?"
"Hoho! Understood-ho!"
"Roger that-ho! I'll bring it over-ho!"
Shortly after, the presence of one of the haniwas was heading far away.
And as Kiriha felt that she grinned.
"If you think I'll only play by the rules you're mistaken, Theia-dono."
Kiriha showed a fearless and confident smile.
She was confident that she wouldn't lose to Theia.
"What are you doing Kiri-chan? The practice is starting."
"Sorry, I'll be right there!"
Kiriha put on her honor student act and headed towards her teammates.

Part 2

Meanwhile, Theia was steadily preparing for the sports festival as well.

Having completely taken over the cheerleading squad, she was shouting at them today as well.

“Maggots, what is your specialty!?”

“Unity! Cheering! Victory!”

“Who is your master!?”

“Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess!”

“I can’t hear you!”

“Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess!”

While the cheerleading squad members were responding to Theia, they were marching in formation around the school building.

Theia was in the back of the formation, waving around a bamboo sword and pushing them forwards.

“Would you die for my sake!?”

“As you wish, my princess!”

“Offer your blood, along with your comrades to me! Devote your lives for the sake of victory!”

“Gung Ho! Gung Ho! Gung Ho!”

The sight of powerful men dressed in jet-black uniforms being ordered around by a young girl in a gym outfit was quite surreal; however, they were all serious about it.

Anyone who would have objected had already been purged by Theia.

“Good! Now sing, you maggots! After me!”

“Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess!”

“One, two, three, go! We’re the wonderful cheerleading squad♪”

“We’re the wonderful cheerleading squad♪”

Following Theia’s high pitched singing voice was the men’s low pitched singing voice.

The voices were carried by the wind and spread across the entire schoolyard.

“Believe in your comrades and protect our princess♪”

“Believe in your comrades and protect our princess♪”

“It’s pretty great!”

“It’s pretty great!”

“It’s pretty great!”

“It’s pretty great!”

“We’ll work until we retire♪”

“We’ll work until we retire♪”

Just as Theia and the new cheerleading squad finished singing their first song, Theia’s bracelet let out a beeping sound.

It was an incoming communication from Ruth.

“…Oh, it’s Ruth… We just got to the good part… Hey, you people just keep on marching!”

“Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess!”

Theia called out to the men’s backs and they continued to march and shout.

And as the men disappeared around the corner of the schoolhouse, Theia ordered the bracelet to communicate with Ruth with a slightly annoyed expression.
“Blue Knight, open communications with Ruth.”
“AS YOU WISH, MY PRINCESS.”
“Ruth, it’s me.”
“Your Highness!”
“What is it? Did something happen?”
Ruth’s serious voice could be heard through the bracelet.
Her voice had none of her normally gentle tone.
Theia quickly picked up on Ruth’s behavior and her annoyed expression disappeared.
“I have discovered two unidentified flying objects above Kitsushouharukaze High School.”
“Unidentified flying objects?”
“Yes. Though they’re hiding using thermo-optic electromagnetic camouflage, so it took a while before I discovered them. They seem to be gathering information from the schoolyard from roughly 100 meters in the sky.”
“Gathering information… Do you have an idea of who it is?”
“I have a presumption.”
“Then let’s hear it.”
“When Blue Knight’s main computer analyzed the slight energy leaking from their camouflage, it calculated that it was with a 63% chance those two haniwas.”
“Haniwas… I don’t know what she’s investigating, but… What are you planning on doing during the sports festival, Kiriha?…”
Having had her first practice interrupted, the annoyed Theia, knowing of her rival’s actions, looked up into the sky with a smile.
It was the smile of a ferocious animal.
“I won’t let Kiriha do as she pleases…. Blue Knight, jam the area above the schoolyard and send out an unmanned attack vessel. Defeat the flying objects when you find them.”
“AS YOU WISH, MY PRINCESS.”
“Your Highness, fighting with Kiriha-sama goes against the convention!”
Ruth was talking about the Corona Convention that Theia and the rest had signed.
In it, one of the articles clearly stated that fighting outside of Room 106 was forbidden.
And while Ruth was worried about Shizuka intervening, Theia’s smile didn’t waver.
“Kukuku, if those really belong to Kiriha, that would be true.”
“Your Highness?”
“However, those are unidentified flying objects. It’s not certain that they belong to Kiriha. Just getting in the way of some peeper doesn’t count as fighting with Kiriha!”
“Are you trying to feign ignorance?”
“That 63% saved me, Kurano Kiriha! Wahahaha!”
With the identity of the flying objects being uncertain, Theia was planning on feigning ignorance.

If she was going up against Kiriha it would be a violation of the convention, however that would not be the case against a peeper.
She was going to claim she didn't know it was Kiriha, but some peeper.
"Please stop, Your Highness! If you do something like that who knows what would—"
"It seems you're planning something, but it stops here, Kurano Kiriha! I won't let you have your way!"
However, Ruth's voice did not reach the excited Theia.
Theia watched as an unmanned attack vessel came out of a black hole in the air, and she smiled happily.
Theia's attack vessel was about 1 meter long and roughly had the shape of an airplane.
However, the unmanned attack vessel was much faster than one could imagine, and it continuously dodged the electric attacks from Korama.
"It's so fast-ho!"
As Korama was taken by surprise, the attack vessel opened the ports for its laser.
Noticing that, Karama hurriedly got in between Korama and the vessel.
The attack vessel's onslaught was blocked by Karama's yellow ether barrier.
"Are you okay, Brother!?"
"Karama! You saved me-ho!"
"Be careful-ho! Don't get into positions where it can go all out-ho!"
The attack vessel had only been attacking with its laser since it couldn't use missiles or live rounds or other things that would leave evidence behind.
And it couldn't cause damage to the surroundings, so it held back on the power and only fired its laser when parallel to the ground or when ascending.
If Theia hadn't ordered that it worry about that, the haniwas most likely would have had a hard time blocking its attacks.
"We can't just lose to some soulless machine-ho!"
"We'll show it our guts-ho!"
The haniwas used electricity and fire and faced the attack vessel.
The battle above Harukaze High School was about to reach its climax.
However, none of the students were aware of the battle raging on above them.
The only ones looking at the sky were the two involved, Kiriha and Theia.

Part 3

The students' glances were on the commotion unfolding in the schoolyard.
"Nooooo! I won't strip, I definitely won't strip!"
"It'll be alright, just relax."
"Yurika-san, you no longer have anywhere to run, so why don't you just give up?"
The center of the commotion was a half-crying girl in uniform and six girls chasing after her in colorful outfits.
"We finally got permission to wear these outfits, so you can't be the only one in uniform Yurika-san!"

“No thanks! That outfit is pretty much the same as not wearing anything! I refuse! Besides, I don’t remember joining the cosplay society!”
Those seven girls were Nijino Yurika and the members of the cosplay society.
It was normal for clubs to have a specific uniform for the obstacle marathon.
For the cosplay society, that would naturally be a cosplay outfit. However, technically that wasn’t a uniform, so they had been unable to use it until they got permission.
Which was why today was the first day they were able to train with their outfits.
“Be reasonable Yurika-san. But if you really don’t like it you can use your own outfit.”
“But that’s a uniform, it’s not really cosplay…”
“Really? What cosplay cafe’s uniform is it? The tailoring was really well done.”
“Yeah, the material was neither polyester nor nylon, I’m so envious~”
“I keep telling you that you’re wrong!”
The cosplay society was trying to get Yurika in her outfit.
It was a custom made outfit the girls had made just for her.
However, Yurika didn’t want to wear it and was running away.
But since Yurika didn’t have a lot of stamina, she couldn’t get away from them.
“P-Please let me go, I’m not like that!”
Being too tired to continue running, Yurika was cornered by the schoolyard fence.
The six girls approached Yurika while she was looking around for an escape path; however, she couldn’t find one.
“W-Why does this always happen to me! It’s not cosplay! I’m trying my best and even then no one listens to a word I say!”
“It’s okay. You don’t have to worry about a thing, Yurika-chan. Just open your mind and leave the rest to us!”
“N-Noooooooooo!”
“Get her!”
However, even then nobody listened to Yurika.
When the cosplay society’s president gave the order, the five members grabbed Yurika at the same time.
“L-Let go!”
“That won’t happen!”
“We finally caught you, there’s no way we’ll let go!”
The outfits she was forced to wear were often quite extreme, and even though she’d given it her all while running away, she was caught today, yet again.
“Bring her in to the locker room and get her changed right away!”
“Understood, president!”
“I’m telling you I don’t want tooooo!”
“Yurika-chan’s legs are long, so I think this long-slit Chinese dress would be good.”
“No, I don’t think we can just throw away magical girl that easily. Especially when we take her own wish into mind.”

“W-Wait just a minuteee!”
The four club members left the president and vice president behind and took Yurika away.
“Hmmm… Magical girl… Chinese dress…”
The president followed the five girls with a cool expression.
The vice president walking next to her had a worried expression.
“Is something the matter, president?”
“Well, I was just wondering what we could put on Yurika-san to make Satomi-kun happy…”
The president blushed and slightly wiggled her body.
“It’s love!”
When the president mentioned Satomi-kun, the vice presidents eyes also began to sparkle.
“It’s because of the love he’s shown!”
“You’re right. From now on we shouldn’t just cosplay based just on what we want, but we should also take in the opinions of the general populace. We might find more people who understand us like Satomi-kun.”
“Then should we go with the basics?”
“Yes… Alright then, it’s decided! Put Yurika-san in a maid outfit!”
“Okaaay!”
“Noooooooooooo!!”
Yurika began struggling frantically. However, she didn’t have the strength to shake off four girls, so she didn’t accomplish anything but shaking her body.
The president and vice president followed the five girls.
The cosplay society was in high spirits after capturing Yurika.
“Hmm? Are you practicing too?”
Koutarou and Harumi passed by. They were wearing gym outfits and were planning on practicing for the marathon.
“Ah, it’s Satomi-kun!”
“Well hello, Koutarou-kun!
The girls passed by Koutarou one after another and greeted him with smiles.
Normally the girls would surround him, but today changing Yurika had a higher priority.
“Hehe, we’re on our way to change Yurika. We’ll start practicing after that.”
“I see, good luck.”
“H-Help me Satomi-san! I’ll be stripped and forced to put on some strange outfit!!”
Yurika had been driven into a corner and was begging Koutarou for help.
The smiling president walked by, blocking the slightly surprised Koutarou’s view.
“Geez, Yurika-san, even if it’s Satomi-kun there’s no need to be embarrassed.”
“Is Yurika always like that?”
“Yes, she’s quite the shy one.”
The president smiled as if nothing was wrong.
Seeing that smile, Koutarou was more concerned about the troubles he was causing the cosplay society than he was about Yurika.

“I’m sorry, it seems I’m causing you trouble.”
“It’s okay. It’s for none other than Satomi-kun’s sake… Just wait, Satomi-kun, you’ll be shocked when we’re done dressing up Yurika.”
The president winked at Koutarou and left with the other club members.
“No, wait! Save me, Satomi-san!!”
Of course they were taking Yurika with them.
Yurika called out for help, but Koutarou showed no signs of helping, and she was dragged away by the cosplay society.

Part 4

“Geez, she’s causing quite a bit of trouble… She’s shy about the strangest things…”
Koutarou let out a small sigh.
Harumi, who had observed the entire encounter, pulled on the edge of Koutarou’s shirt.
“Satomi-kun, that girl was asking for help. Was it alright to just leave her like that?”
“Yes, she was just covering up her embarrassment.”
“That was covering up her embarrassment?”
Harumi was amazed.
“She loves cosplay, but she’s not being honest with herself. She’s enjoying herself like that, senpai.”
“I see…”
As Harumi nodded at Koutarou, she turned to look at Yurika.
Covering up your embarrassment… That’s right, I was the same…
Harumi had felt unrest when Koutarou had joined the knitting society and when she had learned that he was serious about learning knitting.
It’s embarrassing, but finding people that share your hobby is such a blissful happening.
Harumi showed a small smile as she gazed at the backs of the disappearing cosplay society.
As the girls entered the club building, Harumi muttered.
“But, she has quite a unique hobby…”
Harumi understood Yurika’s feelings, but not her hobby.
Koutarou looked at Harumi and dropped his shoulders.
“I don’t really understand it either…”
“…I feel better hearing you say that.”
Harumi put on a large smile and showed her relief.
“I don’t have any extreme hobbies like that.”
“Fufufu. I was actually a bit worried; what would I do if Satomi-kun had said he liked to wear outfits like that?”
“If I said that, what would you do?”
“I would be troubled…”
“Ahahaha, don’t worry, I won’t say something like that!”
Koutarou looked at the schoolyard as he laughed out loud.
He saw a lot of students practicing for the sports festival.

We'll have to work hard. Besides, those girls are planning on practicing as well.

"Shall we go, senpai? We have to practice too."

"...B-But if it's just the two of us, I wouldn't mind what you wear..."

Koutarou proposed that they should begin practicing as well, but for some reason Harumi's cheeks were blushing and she was whispering something.

"Is something wrong?"

"I-It's nothing, nothing at all!"

When Koutarou looked at her, Harumi's face turned even redder and she began walking with quick steps as if running away.

"L-Let's get to practice..."

"Yeah..."

I wonder what happened...

Koutarou felt something wrong and chased after Harumi.

Koutarou sat down with spread legs and leaned his upper body forward. Harumi, who was sitting next to him, looked on in amazement.

She was stretching as well, but she couldn't even bend her body half of what Koutarou could.

"Satomi-kun, you're quite flexible."

"That's because I played baseball during middle school."

"Baseball, you say?"

Baseball and flexibility didn't quite click in Harumi's mind, and she tilted her head in confusion.

And when Koutarou leaned back he called out to Harumi.

"I was always the catcher. Did you know that you can't serve as a catcher if you're not flexible?"

Koutarou took on a catcher's posture and showed her some motions.

Stretching after a ball, blocking the home base, passing the ball to second base—

A catcher used their entire body and constantly moved up and down.

Harumi nodded after seeing Koutarou's examples.

"Baseball has some parts that are similar to rhythmic gymnastics, then?"

"That's the first time someone's said that."

"I rarely move my body, so I'm just stiff."

"Then please, try it."

"Like this?... "

Harumi let out a cute voice as she leaned her body forwards, and she stretched out her arms as far as she could.

However, like she said, her body stopped after 45 degrees or so.

“Is that all you can do?”
“Yes…”
“…I have an idea. Do you mind if I push you, senpai?”
“Eh!?”
The hasty Koutarou moved behind Harumi, not noticing her hesitation.
“It’s fine… You don’t have to…”
“It’ll be fine, it won’t hurt that much…”
Harumi started to panic, but Koutarou disregarded her and put his hands on her back.
“…”
At that point, Harumi who had been wiggling her body, stopped moving completely.
Instead, her face turned as red as a tomato.
“I’m pushing.”
“O-O-O-Okay!”
Harumi was completely bewildered.
Harumi, who was normally alone most of the time, was somewhat nervous just practicing together with someone.
On top of that, a man was touching her body.
Why am I this nervous?… But…
Despite being confused, she didn’t feel any unpleasant feelings when being touched by Koutarou.
Normally, Harumi would feel fear when a member of the other gender touched her.
However, she couldn’t feel any fear despite Koutarou’s large hands pushing her back.
Instead she felt a sense of security and warmth.
“…So you’re not lovers, but you’re interested in him, right?”
Ah…
Harumi remembered the words a girl she was acquainted with had said to her in the hospital.
W-We’re not lovers, but I’m… interested…
When she remembered those words, she got even more nervous and poured more strength into her body.
“Ahaha, your body really is stiff, senpai. It seems this is your limit.”
However Koutarou just laughed in a cheerful manner, unaware of her complex feelings.
When they switched over to running, Harumi’s lack of stamina stood out even more than her stiff body.
Harumi was giving it her all, but since she had a weak constitution, was lacking in exercise and a low lung capacity, she couldn’t even run half as fast as Koutarou.
Because of that, Harumi fell behind Koutarou right from the start.
Koutarou was able to run more than two laps around the 400-meter-long track for every lap Harumi ran.
Koutarou closed in on Harumi, who was running in front of him, as he was about to pass her yet again.
“Koutarou, will it really be okay with that girl?”

It was only natural for Sanae to feel uneasy.
“It’ll be fine. I’ll just work hard for the both of us!”
“You’ll lose, definitely…”
Sanae flew next to Koutarou with a worried expression.
She had been going around the track with him like that from the start.
Sanae had bet on Koutarou, so her rights to the room depended on the ranking of the Knitting Society.
She needed the Knitting Society to win the obstacle marathon.
“We’ll win. Or rather, I want senpai to win.”
“Why?”
“Well, I don’t really have a reason. I guess it’s as thanks.”
At first, Koutarou had just wanted Harumi to participate, but now he wanted her to stand up on the podium.
Koutarou felt it was his duty when he saw Harumi giving practice her all despite her condition.
“Hmm… Well, either way, make sure you win!”
“Leave it to me!”
Sanae didn’t know what Koutarou was thinking. However, she could sense his eagerness, so she decided not to question his decision any further.
“Hmm?”
Koutarou suddenly stopped running, and Sanae came to a stop as well.
“What’s wrong?”
Several students ran past them after they stopped.
“No, I just felt like someone was watching us again…”
Koutarou looked around, but he couldn’t find the owner of the gaze.
“Isn’t it that?”
“Hm?”
Koutarou looked in the direction Sanae was pointing and saw Theia, Ruth, and Kiriha.
They were wiping off sweat with their towels and drinking out of their water bottles.
When the three of them noticed Koutarou was looking at them, Ruth lightly bowed, Kiriha smiled, and Theia sulkily turned her face away.
“I see, they were the ones looking…”
Satisfied, Koutarou relaxed his shoulders.
“I’ll go scout them out for a bit.”
“Yeah.”
Sanae left Koutarou and headed towards the three.
At the same time, Harumi came running up, as if to replace Sanae.
“Hah, hah, hah… S-Satomi-kun, were you talking to somebody?”
It seemed like she had overheard Koutarou talking to Sanae.
“Eh? Y-yeah, I was talking to myself. I was thinking of strategies for the sports festival.”
“Hah, hah… S-Sorry. I’m not very athletic, so I’m just getting in your way…”
After hearing Koutarou’s explanation, Harumi showed a cloudy expression.

Though it was hard to hear her because of her rough breathing, she spoke in an apologetic tone.
"Not at all, senpai. Since you're participating, just have fun while you're making your way to the goal. They say it's more important to participate, after all."
"Hah, hah... Yes!"
Harumi smiled after being encouraged by Koutarou.
"You're finally getting into to it, so just have fun. Besides, I said you could retire at the start."
"Even then, I... Um... didn't want to get in your way..."
Harumi showed an embarrassed smile while she was breathing roughly.
And Koutarou's desire to put her on the podium got even stronger.
Fortunately, the obstacle marathon for clubs was a team event, so only the first to cross the goal line mattered.
Which was why she could just complete the race in her own pace while Koutarou fought for a high position.
I'll definitely make her win!
At some point, getting Harumi up on the podium became more important than the match with the invaders for Koutarou.

Part 5

"What's with that woman!?"
While Koutarou began running with Harumi, Theia bit her lip, irritated.
Seeing Koutarou match his speed with Harumi and smile bothered Theia.
"She is the president of Koutarou's club. Her name is Sakuraba Harumi in Class 2-A."
Kiriha, who was standing next to Theia, explained who Harumi was.
Kiriha had already investigated the people around Koutarou.
That girl will probably get in the way of getting Koutarou to hand over the room...
Kiriha also showed some interest in Harumi.
Based on Koutarou's behavior, some of the reason of why Kiriha's use of sex appeal to convince Koutarou wasn't working was definitely because of Harumi.
She was also the reason why Kiriha was avoiding sex appeal and fighting fairly.
"In other words, that Harumi girl is Koutarou's princess."
Sanae said while she came up to Theia and the rest, her words sounding more aggressive than normal, probably due to the upcoming sports festival.
She was probably planning on putting some pressure on them.
"So what!? Does that mean Koutarou has sworn his loyalty to that woman!?"
"Yes, well... Something like that."
"How could this be!?"
Sanae's words enraged Theia, and Sanae was secretly satisfied it had gone according to plan.
Theia showed no signs of noticing Sanae's intention and raged on.
"What part of that woman is better than me!? The fool, he's swearing loyalty to the wrong person!"
Theia couldn't hold it in.

The person that was supposed to swear loyalty to her had instead done so to some country girl.
On top of that, it was to a weak girl who had no power.
This hurt Theia's pride.
Theia had absolute confidence in herself.
She had confidence in her body, in her position as seventh princess, and even in her mental strength.
Theia believed she was superior to Harumi in every way.
Despite that, Koutarou had chosen the weak Harumi over Theia.
And he showed no respect towards Theia; she just couldn't accept it.
"It's got nothing to do with reasoning~"
"What's that supposed to mean!?"
It has nothing to do with reasoning!?
Those words upset Theia even more.
Even though the plebeian knows about the insurmountable gap between me and that girl, he still favors her!?
"That's not possible! That kind of thing is impossible!"
Theia couldn't accept it.
It took wisdom, power, and courage to stand above others.
The Forthorthe royal family had prospered for over 1000 years with that logic.
Because of that, Theia couldn't admit it, no matter what.
Ruth smiled and looked at Theia.
"Your Highness, I'm not following you based on reasoning either."
Ruth put her hands in front of her chest and smiled gently.
She had always looked over Theia as an older sister.
Wisdom, power, and courage didn't matter to her.
"Ruth is special! The Pardomshiha family has served the royal Forthorthe family since before the founding of our country!"
"Your Highness..."
Hearing Theia's response, Ruth was both happy and sad at the same time.
The young Theia didn't quite accurately understand Ruth's feelings.
Ruth would have sworn her loyalty to Theia even if she hadn't been born into the Pardomshiha family.
However, if Theia admitted that, it would be the same as admitting that Koutarou didn't accept her.
The young and prideful Theia just couldn't do that.
"...Curse you, pleb. You're always finding some way to provoke me!"
And Theia continued to bite her lip as she stared at Koutarou and Harumi.

Invaders of the Sports Festival!?

Part 1

Sunday, May 10th

It was the day of the sports festival. The sun was shining brightly in the courtyard, and there were practically no clouds in the sky.

“It seems we made the right choice in coming here.”

“The courtyard is quieter, too, and there’s not as much dust…”

Koutarou and Harumi were in the courtyard.

The morning games had ended, and they had headed here in order to eat lunch.

The schoolyard was full of people, and the dust was flying with the wind.

That was why they had snuck away from the schoolyard and came here.

“But actually, I’m embarrassed spreading out my lunch in front of people…”

“There’s no need to be embarrassed. It looks delicious!”

“Really?”

Harumi covered herself with the colorful cloth she had wrapped her bento in and stole a glance at Koutarou’s expression.

Harumi had prepared today’s lunch for the both of them.

She normally let her mother prepare it for her, but she was determined to prepare the lunch herself for the school festival.

“Yes. It doesn’t look like someone with no experience in cooking made it.”

“Thank god… I was a bit worried.”

Hearing Koutarou’s response, Harumi removed the cloth from her face and let out a sigh of relief.

She was worried she might have disappointed Koutarou.

“There’s no need to be worried; it’s really well made.”

“But… I don’t think I’ll be of much help in the obstacle marathon, so I at least wanted to get you something to eat…”

“Senpai, you worry too much. Men are simple, so they’re just happy a girl made them lunch, regardless of how well made it is!”

“B-But I’m really worried about the quality of the lunch….”

“It must be hard being a girl… Well, thanks for the food.”

Koutarou quit chatting and put the food in his mouth.

He had been working hard since the morning and was now starving.

Five blue ribbons were lined up on Koutarou’s gym outfit.

The ribbons showed off your placing, and blue stood for first place.

Koutarou had taken the first place in all five events he had taken part of.

Because of that, he had used up a lot of stamina and was now starving.

“It’s… delicious!”

“Ah…”

Harumi was smiling brightly due to Koutarou’s words.

Her food didn't just look good, but tasted good as well. She was so happy she could break out in dance.
In reality, her lunch was actually splendid.
Her omelette, hamburger and wiener along with the basic side dishes might have been plain but they had been made with care.
The taste was also remarkable; it was a praiseworthy lunch for a beginner.
Koutarou, who grew up in a motherless family and cooked for himself, understood that very well.
What to say…? Having someone make food for you without an ulterior motive is a great thing.
That is what Koutarou felt as he ate one dish after the other.
Having lost his mother early on, it was rare for someone to cook food for Koutarou out of good will.
Kiriha had lately been making the food, but that was because she was aiming to take over Room 106.
"Is there anything you don't like?"
"Not really… Well, I can't say there's nothing."
At first, Koutarou couldn't think of anything, but he quickly took his words back.
And Harumi began feeling nervous.
"What was bad?"
"There's not enough!"
"W-What is there not enough of?"
The taste? The time spent cooking? Or my experience?
Harumi couldn't help but feel worried.
"The amount. If it's this delicious, I can eat three times this amount!"
"T-The amount…?"
Having gotten back an unexpected response, Harumi spaced out for a while.
"Well, there are more events in the afternoon, so this might be just right. If I eat till I'm full, it'll be hard to move around."
"…"
"Next time, please make lots of it when I don't have to move."
"Next time…"
Koutarou began moving his chopsticks with a smile.
Seeing that, Harumi also began to smile.
Next time… Next time, he wants to… eat more… He likes it…
Harumi was so happy, words escaped her.
So this is what it's like to have friends…
Harumi had a weak constitution and was going in and out of the hospital constantly.
Though the children at the hospital and the nurses were her friends, she had no friends around her own age; Koutarou was the first.
It was enough to make her want to cry tears of joy.
"What's wrong, senpai?"
Koutarou looked up from his lunch, interested in Harumi, who had fallen silent.
And he saw Harumi with her cheeks blushing red and with moist eyes.

Koutarou started panicking when he saw Harumi, who looked like she would cry at any moment.
“A-Are you okay!? D-Did I say something stupid!?”
Koutarou couldn’t understand how Harumi felt.
Ever since he was young, he had, starting with Kenji, always had a lot of friends, so he couldn’t even begin to imagine how Harumi felt.
That was why he felt he had done something wrong and started panicking.
“I’m fine… I just got some dirt in my eyes… So I’m going to go clean my face!”
Harumi stared down to avoid Koutarou’s glance and hurriedly stood up.
She could hear her own heart beating quickly, and she was worried if Koutarou could hear it too.
If I don’t calm down, I’ll say something strange that would trouble Satomi-kun…
Harumi ran out from the courtyard with her throbbing heart and dizzy head.
“Senpai…?”

Part 2

Being left behind, Koutarou couldn’t swallow what had happened and simply tilted his head.
However, Sanae who was hanging onto Koutarou, could faintly understand Harumi’s feelings.
“…That kind of ticks me off!”
Sanae began wringing Koutarou’s neck for revenge.
She was already hanging onto Koutarou’s neck in order to taste the lunch, so wringing his neck was easy from the position she was in.
“Guh, Guaaaa!?”
“Dammit! Ahhh! It’s really getting on my nerves!”
“W-What are you doing all of a sudden!?”
“Think of the situation you’re in instead of getting carried away! If you don’t win today, you know what will happen!”
“Sa-Sanae, d-don’t think the same trick will work over and over again!”
Koutarou kept himself from passing out and reached into his pocket with his right hand.
And he pressed what he picked up onto Sanae.
“Gyafu!?”
At that moment, a small explosion occurred and blew Sanae backwards.
“Alright! Thank you, grandma!”
Koutarou had a small charm embroidered with golden thread in his hand.
And thankfully, it held quite a bit of power against ghosts like Sanae.
Family Safety.
Those golden words bathed brilliantly in the sunlight.
“What are you doing all of a sudden!?”
Sanae returned with her right hand on her head.
She floated in front of Koutarou and started to complain.
“That’s my line! You’re always trying to choke me for some absurd reason! You try being the one who passes out for no reason!”

“Don’t whine about something like that! You’re a man; don’t get hung up on those kind of things! It’s only normal for ghosts to harm people!”
“Then don’t complain when people defend themselves! You evil spirit!”
“I don’t believe you! You can’t call someone as cute as me an evil spirit!”
The two’s foreheads collided, creating a loud sound.
It seemed like their quarrel was about to get out of hand when a third person got in between them.
“It seems you’re quite the star, Koutarou.”
“Kiriha!?”
Kiriha had shown up.
With her long hair fluttering in the refreshing wind, she had snuck up on Koutarou and Sanae.
“You seem to be quite the star yourself, Kiriha-san.”
Several ribbons were attached to Kiriha’s chest.
Three blue and two yellow, to be precise.
She had taken first place in three events and second place in two.
“What are you staring at her chest for, Koutarou!? You really are a pervert!”
“You’re wrong! Just look at that!”
“Like I want to look at someone else’s breasts! Are you trying to tell me you can see her bra or something!?”
“Of course not! I’m talking about the ribbons! I was looking at Kiriha’s results!”
“Yes, I’m sure you’d give Kiriha’s breast a perfect score.”
“Listen to what I’m trying to tell you, stupid ghost!”
“What, I also have some pride, you know!”
“Is a ghost’s pride that it’s transparent!?”
Koutarou and Sanae butted heads yet again, and at that point yet another person appeared in the courtyard.
“It’s good you’re still full of vigor, pleb. There would be no meaning in making you crawl on the ground if you weren’t!”
Theia and Ruth had shown up, and behind them there were rough-looking men led by Theia.
Theia had four ribbons on her chest, all of them blue.
In reality, Theia had participated in six events since this morning, but she had thrown away any ribbons from second place or lower.
And the cheerleading squad who had been helping and cheering for her were covered in sweat.
By the way, Ruth had two ribbons, a yellow and a green one, meaning second and third place.

“Just be quiet, Tulip! I’m busy at the moment!”
“That’s right! There’s no place for you here, Cliff Chest!”
Koutarou and Sanae didn’t look over to Theia and were instead staring each other down.
And Theia couldn’t stand it.
It was vexing enough that Koutarou wasn’t showing any respect, but at the same time, Sanae had brought up the subject she hated the most.
Because of that, Theia immediately blew her top.
“Are you picking a fight with me, you mongrels!? I should turn you into ashes right away!”
“You can’t, Your Highness!”
Even with Ruth trying to stop her, Theia would no longer back down.
Theia headed over to Koutarou and Sanae and butted heads with them.
“Just do it if you can, Tulip!”
“I’ll turn you into ashes after fixing your rotten character!”
“Hey! Listen to me!”
And as the three of them were butting heads, the close quarter quarrel started.
“Your Highness, Satomi-sama!”
“Leave them be, Ruth. They don’t hate each other as much as they say they do.”
“Stop saying such tasteless things, Kiriha-san! Of course I hate these things!”
“What do you mean with these things!? Call me Your Highness Theia, you pleb!”
“Take that back Koutarou! How could you call someone as pretty as me tasteless!?”
“I meant it just the way I said it, you idiots!”
Their quarrel escalated as they exchanged insults.
“Satomi-kun♪”
“Hellooo♪”
“Hm?”
The sudden casual shouts calmed Koutarou down.
The voices belonged to the six girls in the cosplay society.
Koutarou, Sanae, and Theia’s quarrel was interrupted by the girls’ appearance.
“It looks like you’re having fun, Koutarou-kun.”
They were pushing their president forward with a handcart and approached Koutarou and the others.
The cosplay society members were not cosplaying, though; they were in the standard gym outfit.
They followed the rules and wouldn’t cosplay unless they got permission to do so.
What are they doing?
What caught Koutarou’s interest was the handcart the girls were using to push their president.
Inside of it was a large sack that measured more than a meter that would twitch from time to time.
“...! ...!”
It looked like the sack was alive.
“Hello.”
“Hello, Satomi-kun. And hello to your friends.”
The president smiled and greeted everyone, and following suit, the ten girls greeted each other.

Theia's cheerleading squad stood in attention and didn't say a word.
As the girls finished greeting each other, the president called out to Koutarou.
"You can look forward to the obstacle marathon, Koutarou-kun. Today's outfit is a masterpiece!"
"We stayed up all night to make it!"
"That's right. I lost count on how many times we stabbed our fingers on needles."
"...That was just you."
While the girls were talking the sack would move from time to time.
"...! ...! ...!"
Well, what does it matter...
Koutarou was curious about the contents of the sack, but he chose not to question it.
It was around this time that Harumi returned to the courtyard.
"Satomi-kun...?"
There were now lots of people around Koutarou.
And there were over 20 people in the courtyard now; Harumi had seen a few of them before.
"Oh, aren't you quite the cutie!"
"Ah, S-stop, don't touch me!"
"Wouldn't you like to join our club?"
"I refuse! As if I'd join your suspicious club!"
"What a shame~"
"Well then, what about you two?"
"If Theia-sama won't join, I will have to decline."
"I'm in the track and field team, so I'm afraid I can't, senpai."
"Tulip, did you join the cheerleading squad?"
"That's right. Unlike you, these men have unwavering loyalty to me. Isn't that right!?"
"Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess!"
"They've been completely brainwashed..."
"Well, it seems the true cheerleading squad is no longer around..."
Everyone was cheerfully talking and smiling.
And even Koutarou made expressions Harumi had never seen before.
"I... can't possible approach them..."
Harumi stood perfectly still. Her throbbing heart had slowed down and her uplifting feelings had changed.
Harumi realized she only knew a fraction of the true Koutarou, and that saddened her.
"Satomi-kun doesn't really think I..."
Harumi couldn't move.
She just couldn't mix in with the commotion taking place.
The mere 20 meters felt like a hopelessly long distance to her.

Part 3

Suddenly, several fireworks went off in the blue sky.

Although it was still broad daylight, when so many of them were fired at the same time, they stood out.

It was the signal that the obstacle marathon for clubs was soon about to begin.

The obstacle marathon course was 5 kilometers long and had 10 different obstacles to overcome.

Since this event mixed men and women, the women were given easier obstacles as a handicap.

And because the obstacles were not just about physical prowess, the winning team changed every year.

Since Kitsushouharukaze High School was filled with clubs, and so many clubs participated, this event naturally turned into the main event.

"Fufufu, the moment I've been waiting for has finally arrived..."

Koutarou stretched his arms while looking around him.

There were over 100 people gathered at the start line.

Harukaze had over 50 clubs of varying size.

And with the majority of them participating, it was only obvious there would be this many people.

The outfits they were in varied, with the majority of them wearing their club uniforms.

The remainder was mostly comprised of liberal clubs wearing the standard gym outfit.

"Kou, you seem awfully confident."

"Can you tell?"

"I haven't been your partner for years for show."

"As expected from my comrade Mackenzie!"

Having finished warming up, Koutarou slapped Kenji on the back with his big hand.

"Owowow!"

"Today's victory will go to me!"

"Don't be so naive. Even your head is full of muscle; there's no way you'll win. I'm not even sure if you can beat me!"

"Those are some big words. Then, would you like to make a bet, Mackenzie?"

"You're on. Whichever one of us cross the goal line first wins!"

"The loser owes the winner a meal, got it?"

"Got it!"

Kenji grinned; he had confidence in his footwork.

Koutarou had the upper hand when it came to physical strength, but Kenji had dexterity and intelligence going for him.

That was why he was betting that he would be able to beat Koutarou in this event, which tested the participant's collective strength.

"Hah, you've made a stupid bet, Kou. I hope you're prepared to buy me the special lunch!"

"I don't want to hear you calling me stupid when you're wearing something like that!"

"Just shut up. I'm in the drama club, so it can't be helped."

Kenji wasn't wearing a gym outfit, but rather, a pure white tuxedo. A crimson rose decorated his chest.

It was a stage outfit the drama club was using.
“Oh, it looks like you two are doing something interesting.”
“Landlord-san!”
As the two finished up their conversation, Shizuka appeared.
Shizuka had been asked to help the cooking society in the marathon, and was wearing an apron on top of her gym outfit.
It was a strange outfit, rivaling even Kenji’s.
“Would you mind if I join in on your bet?”
“Kasagi-san too? We’re quite confident in this, you know.”
“Well, I’m asking because I’m quite confident myself.”
“But—”
Kenji tried to dissuade Shizuka, but Koutarou held the opposite opinion.
“What does it matter Mackenzie. Let landlord-san join in too.”
“Would that be ok?”
“Yeah.”
Besides, I don’t know if I could beat landlord-san or not…
Unlike Kenji, Koutarou was fully aware of how strong Shizuka was.
Koutarou didn’t think Shizuka would fall behind in this event after she took down the four invaders with just her bare hands.
She was also about as smart as Kenji was.
“Then we’ll add in Kasagi-san and make it three people”
“I won’t lose, you two.”
“Just bring it on, landlord-san!”
Fufufu, with this, Mackenzie will have to buy two meals…
After Shizuka’s participation had been decided, the bleachers next to the start line began cheering for Kenji.
“Kenji-kun! You’re so cool!”
“Rosenchevalier-sama! Look this way!”
Several camera flashes followed.
They were Kenji’s fans.
Kenji had had fans ever since middle school.
“Go on and wave, Rosenchevalier-sama. Your fans are calling for you.”
“Shut it!”
“Koutarou-kun! Point the chevalier this way!”
“Sure, sure.”
“H-Hey!?”
Koutarou grabbed a hold of Kenji’s head and forcefully turned him towards the bleachers.
And the camera flashed start up again.
“There’s no need to be shy. You’re only pissing off the guys around you; me too, of course.”
“Would you stop it, Kou!?”

“Oh right, sorry. That girl would get sad, after all.”
Next to Kenji was a girl wearing a crimson dress.
She was a member of the drama club, and the clothes she was wearing were also from an old play.
Today they were cast as the Crimson Maiden and the Rosenchevalier.
“Excuse me, I’m the one that invited Matsudaira-san to the club. I don’t think he has any interest in going out with me…”
“You’re mistaken, miss. You’re falling for his normal tricks!”
The Crimson Maiden attempted to cover for Kenji, but she wavered when faced with Koutarou’s force.
“I’ll kill you, you bastard!”
“Kyaaa, save me, Sakuraba-senpai! Mackenzie is bullying me!”
“S-Satomi-kun!?”
As Kenji began to get angry, Koutarou laughed and hid behind Harumi.
“H-Hello, Sakuraba-senpai!”
“Hello, Matsudaira-kun.”
When Harumi and Kenji faced each other, they were oddly flustered.
“Um… Eh…”
“That’s playing dirty, Koutarou!”
Though time had passed and they had gotten used to one another, Harumi was still uncomfortable around Kenji.
Which was why Harumi fell silent immediately.
Kenji understood how she felt and didn’t want to say anything unnecessary.
“Senpai, while we’re at it, say hello to the drama club member next to Mackenzie and Landlord-san.”
“Y-Yes, hello!”
“Hello, Sakuraba-san.”
“Hello, Sakuraba-senpai!”
Harumi bowed to the Crimson Maiden and Shizuka.
“L-Let’s give it our all today.”
“I’m worried if I’ll be able to reach the goal in this outfit…”
“Ahaha, that dress is wonderful.”
After finishing their greetings, the atmosphere calmed down around Harumi.
“…”
“What’s with that look, Mackenzie?”
Koutarou noticed Kenji giving him a stinging glare.
“Kou, can’t you do that in a way that’s easier to get?”
“What are you talking about?”
“…I give up.”
Kenji dropped his shoulders and scratched his head.
Having known Koutarou for a long time, Kenji understood that he had been used to forcefully pull Harumi into the group.
And as he let out a small sigh, Harumi greeted him again.

“I’m sorry for before, Sakuraba-senpai.”
“N-No, it was nothing.”
“Sakuraba-senpai, as Satomi-kun says, Mackenzie-kun seems to be quite the lady killer, so stay on your guard!”
“…R-Really?”
“That’s a lie, that’s definitely a lie!”
Good luck, Sakuraba-senpai…
Koutarou turned away from the four and looked around the starting point again.
And like before, there were various people around.
“…It doesn’t look like they’ll just let me win.”
There were large and strong looking people, and small and agile people around the area.
In order to put Harumi on the podium, he needed to clear all the obstacles and reach the goal before anyone else.
“Alright! Let’s do this!”
Koutarou pumped himself up in order to keep himself from letting his guard down.
“Hey, Koutarou.”
“Hm?”
At that point Sanae, who was floating next to Koutarou, clung to his back.
She wrapped her thin arms around his neck while smiling.
“You know, you’re unexpectedly…”
“What?”
“It’s nothing. Nyahaha!”
In the end, Sanae didn’t say anything and instead showed a large smile.
Koutarou, however couldn’t see it since Sanae was clinging onto his back, and Sanae herself wasn’t quite aware of it.
Hm?
Sanae noticed what Koutarou was looking at; it was two baseball club members wearing their uniform.
“…Koutarou, can I ask you a question?”
“What?”
“If it keeps bothering you, why don’t you just play baseball?”
“Eh?”
Surprised, Koutarou looked at Sanae.
I knew it…
Sanae did not miss the surprise and hesitation Koutarou showed.
“You’ve been looking at the baseball club whenever you get a chance. I can tell.”
“…Oh.”
Koutarou took his eyes off Sanae and looked back at the baseball club members.
He felt he had no need to hide his feelings and opened his mouth.
“Well, I love baseball. It’s not the kind of sport you can do while living on your own, though.”

“Hmm…”
Koutarou had a nostalgic and lonely look, and seeing that, an idea popped into Sanae’s head.
If I helped with the housework, Koutarou might be able to play baseball…
Cooking, washing, cleaning, preparing the bath.
If Sanae took over the household chores Koutarou was doing everyday, he might get the free time he needed to play baseball.
That was the idea that popped in Sanae’s head, but she quickly denied it and panicked.
“J-Just what am I thinking!?”
I’m chasing him out! I have to chase Koutarou out of that room no matter what! So why would I think of helping with the housework!?
Sanae was puzzled by her own feelings; she couldn’t believe she wanted to help someone who she was supposed to chase out.
And what really made Sanae hesitate was the fact that she didn’t have any unpleasant feelings about helping Koutarou.
“What?”
“It’s nothing! Absolutely nothing! Just leave it!”
When Koutarou worriedly called out to her, Sanae felt even more perplexed.
Just what am I doing!?
However this time, Sanae was perplexed about more than Koutarou.
Meanwhile, Theia was also in the crowd by the starting point.
She was standing in front the cheerleading squad, in the middle of a speech.
“All of you, you’ve done well to endure until today! Although only one of you will participate with me today, it was thanks to your daily training! Cheer on me like you’re the one who’s participating with me!”
She was wearing the squad leader’s armband, with both her hands on her hips and standing tall.
However, Theia’s small body was hidden in the crowd.
But the crowd couldn’t cover up her loud voice and it reached the squad members who stood upright.
And the cheerleading squad responded to her with full power.
“Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess!”
The men’s loud voices carried across the starting point and shook the earth.
“The problem is not who will accompany me! The problem is if I will win or not!”
“For Her Highness Theiamillis’ victory!! Glory to the Forthorthe royal family!”
The cheerleading squad’s morale was high. The harsh training they had endured up until today had strengthened their unity.
Their goal was Theia’s victory, not their own.
Because of that, they endured their harsh training.
If Theia ordered them to die, they would probably do so.
That was the loyalty that Theia sought for.
“Good luck, Your Highness”
“Yes, leave it to me Ruth. I’ll be sure to win.”

Ruth wasn't the one who would participate with Theia, but rather the strongest and fastest member in the cheerleading squad.
Because of that, Ruth was with the remaining members in the bleachers.
"Your Highness, it's almost time."
"Very well, then let's go!"
"Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess!"
"Let's see what you've got, Kurano Kiriha..."
Theia headed for the starting line whilst grinning.
Meanwhile, Kiriha was already by the starting line.
Because they would be competing, she had nothing to lose from starting at the front line.
"We'll start soon, Kiri-chan. Let's give it our all!"
"Of course, Takahashi-senpai."
"...Karama, how is it going?"
"Everyone is in position. Korama confirmed it from above-ho."
Kiriha whispered, and a response was whispered into her ear.
A camouflaged haniwa was floating next to her.
"It seems there are no traitors-ho. Just leave the rest to us-ho!"
"Alright, I'll leave it to you."
"Understood-ho!"
All that's left is to wait for the start...
After finishing her final check, Kiriha revealed a small smile.
And Takahashi, who was next to Kiriha, noticed her smile.
"Kiri-chan, what are you smiling for?"
"Actually, I made a bet with my friends."
Though startled, Kiriha naturally responded and smiled.
"A bet!? Is it with a boy!?"
"Yes."
"What did you bet?"
"The loser has to hand over something precious to the winner."
Kiriha mentioned part of the truth.
Kiriha had made a bet with Koutarou and the rest, and the loser would have to hand over part of their tatami territory to the winner.
"Kyaa! How bold! But wouldn't the outcome be the same regardless of who wins!?"
But Takahashi had no idea that Kiriha was fighting over territory and had completely misunderstood.
Speaking of misunderstandings, the cosplay society positioned at the rear had made the biggest misunderstanding.
Out of the six members, even the five not participating were cosplaying.
Today, all of them were wearing matching maid outfits.
The only one with a different design was the president who was wearing an armband and a headdress.
She was dressed as the head maid.

After looking at her clock, she called out to the vice president next to her.
“It’ll be starting soon. Vice-president, get Yurika ready, please.”
“Very well, right away.”
Yurika and the president would be the two to represent the cosplay society in the obstacle marathon.
In order to educate the new member, they would form a pair and participate.
However, oddly enough, Yurika was nowhere to be seen.
“Everyone, bring Yurika over!”
“Okaaay!”
When the vice-president gave the other members the signal, they brought out a handcart.
The handcart was loaded with the sack Koutarou had taken notice of before.
However, unlike during the lunch break, the sack wasn’t moving at all.
“And now, open it up!”
“Okaaay!”
The girls loosened the rope around the sack and turned it upside down.
And Yurika in a maid outfit came falling out.
She was gagged and bound with rope.
Yurika, who was against cosplaying, had been forced to wear the maid outfit against her will and then restrained up to now.
And the girls quickly loosened her restraints.
“Uuuhhh… I-I’m finally free…”
Though freed, Yurika had toppled to the ground and did not move.
She curled up as tears streamed down from her large eyes.
“W-Why do I have to go through something like this…”
Nobody would listen to Yurika when she said she hated cosplaying.
Everyone had made the misunderstanding that Yurika loved cosplay but just couldn’t admit it.
“…I can’t get married anymore…”
“You look beautiful, Yurika-chan~”
“Give it your all today!”
“Being a bride is in the past! You’ll be permanently employed by the cosplay society from now on!”
“I don’t want tooooo!”
Yurika aside, the cosplay society was in high spirits, especially the president, whose eyes were sparkling.
“Would you stop it, Yurika-chan? You’ll ruin your make-up!”
The president wiped off Yurika’s tears and pulled out her own make-up set to fix Yurika’s appearance.
Though she couldn’t be called a professional, she was considerably skilled. Yurika became more and more beautiful.
“Let’s surprise Koutarou-kun during the race, okay?”
“I don’t want to surprise him wearing this outfit!”
As always, nobody listened to Yurika.
Ironically, she looked more beautiful than anyone as she continued to cry.

Part 4

The principal stepped up on a platform next to the starting point.
It was the principal's job to give the starting signal for the main event.
The people gathered at the starting point watched as he stepped up the stairs.
The schoolyard fell silent, and everyone was anxiously waiting for the race to start.
The principal pointed a starting pistol up into the sky, and the commentator's voice came out from the speakers.
"On your mark! Get set…"
Following the commentator's lead, the principal squeezed the trigger of the pistol.
The pistol made a shrill sound that echoed through the schoolyard.
And the schoolyard that had quieted down immediately let out a roar.
As expected from the event everyone had waited for, the excitement culminated instantly.
"Here we go, Kiri-chan!"
"Yes, Takahashi-senpai!"
The two members of the girl's track and field team dashed into the lead.
With a beautiful form, they continued to accelerate.
It was an excellent start that only the track and field team could do.
"We fell behind!?"
"Dammit, after them!"
"Don't let the girl's track and field team get ahead of us!"
As the others followed the girl's track and field team, something unexpected happened.
Several club members at the front had fallen.
It seemed like their legs had gotten tangled in the confusion at the start.
"Ouch, don't step on me; move away, you guys!"
"Owowow, it hurts!"
"That's my leg! Don't bend it in some strange way!"
"Hey, don't touch me in weird places!"
The lead group collapsed, and a large commotion followed.
Those who weren't involved in the commotion were unable to move forward because of those who had collapsed, and the start line turned into a standstill.
"Lucky! I don't know what happened, but this is our chance, Kiri-chan!"
"Yes, senpai!"
This was a big plus for the girl's track and field team.
Having dashed into the lead and with the lead group behind them collapsing, they were able to leave the other competitors behind.
Kiriha and Takahashi ran next to each other and swiftly turned.
After half a lap around the school's track, the course went outside of the school.
The two of them had finished running half a lap before the collapsed people could stand up again.
"Fufufu…"

Just before they left through the school gates, Kiriha looked back at the commotion and showed a small smile for just a moment.
Kiriha swiftly ran under the school gates and vanished.
“We’ve been had! Damn that Kiriha, to think she was planning something like this!”
Along with Theia’s shrill voice, a large man in an old-fashioned uniform stood up.
And below the large man was Theia, who had an irritated expression.
Theia had also gotten involved in the incident, but she didn’t seem have been hurt.
When the accident happened, she had her partner cover her.
“Did she seduce them, or did she bribe them?... Either way, I’ve been totally had! Dammit!”
Theia assumed this commotion was one of Kiriha’s strategies.
The collapse had occurred immediately after the girl’s track and field team had dashed into the lead.
Theia couldn’t believe that it was just a coincidence.
“As I thought, I can’t let my guard down around that woman!”
As Theia assumed, this commotion was one of Kiriha’s strategies.
Kiriha had bribed several powerful clubs and caused the collapse.
By bribing them, she reduced the number of rivals while also gaining a large lead.
Twice the value for a single bribe; it was a splendid strategy.
“I won’t let it go the way that woman’s plans. Throw me over to the other side!”
“Hail to the princess!”
The large man began moving as he heard Theia’s orders.
He easily lifted her up and threw her like he would throw a basketball.
It was a feat made possibly only because of Theia’s small size and the man’s strength.
“I will go on ahead! Meet up with me later!”
“Hail to the princess!”
Having been thrown, Theia flew over the collapsed group and landed with both of her feet on the tracks.
And she continued to run without looking behind her.
She was a quick runner for her small size.
“A-Are you okay, Sakuraba-senpai!?”
“Thank you, Satomi-kun. But what happened?”
“I don’t know, it looks like the front group collapsed at once.”
After falling a few seconds behind Theia, Koutarou lifted up Harumi and carried her with both of his arms.
As the front group collapsed, Koutarou and Harumi were in the middle of the group.
They had been trapped between the front group and the people pressing from behind, but they had finally gotten free and were now picking themselves up.
“Eh!?”
At that point, Koutarou saw Theia running.
Having finished running the track, Theia was heading for the school gates.
Not good, we’ve fallen behind!!

Koutarou looked at the front group that was still in a commotion.

“What to do… Even if I try to pass through there…”

It didn’t look like the commotion would die down any time soon.

But at the same time, he knew that Kiriha and Theia were in the lead.

“Koutarou, over there! Those three!”

“Oh?”

Sanae, who was hanging onto Koutarou, pointed towards the front.

He saw three powerful looking men who were trying to stand up.

The rugby club, judo club and sumo club. They were all wearing distinct outfits.

“Now’s our chance!”

As he saw them, he began to smile and run.

“Let’s go, Sakuraba-senpai!”

“Satomi-kun!?”

Koutarou ran towards them, increasing his speed.

“Hold on, Sakuraba-senpai!”

“Kyaaaaaaaaa!”

“Juuuuump!”

And Koutarou trampled on the rugby club, judo club, and sumo club members and forcefully jumped.

They were the perfect stepping stones, as they were trying to stand up.

“Sorry! Excuse me!!”

“Who’s stepping on me!?”

“I’m being used as a stepping stone!?”

“Gottsan desu[1]!?”

Koutarou and Harumi fluttered in the air as they flew over the leading group.

Because of the sudden action, Harumi was desperately holding on to Koutarou, trying not to fall off.

Both of Koutarou’s feet were firmly planted onto the track.

Their combined weight exceeded 100 kilos.

Because of that, there was a large sound as they impacted with the ground.

“Kyaa!?”

“Are you okay, Sakuraba-senpai!?”

Before Harumi could recover from the shock of landing, Koutarou continued running.

“That’s my line! Are you okay, Satomi-kun!?”

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1 A shortened version of Gochisou san desu (Thanks for the meal) used by sumo wrestlers who tend to speak with their bodies more than their mouths.

“I’m fine! I’m well trained, after all!”
Recovering from the shock, Harumi was worried about Koutarou’s body, but Koutarou himself showed a smile full of confidence.
Koutarou, who was a catcher up until middle school, used to wear protective gear weighing several kilos including the glove.
In order to train his ability to move, he would practice while wearing the protective gear or run around while dragging a tire along behind him. His lower body was very robust.
“…Really?”
“Please leave that line until you’ve gotten fatter, Sakuraba-senpai!”
Koutarou smiled as he ran around the track while carrying Harumi.
He seems fine… You’re amazing, Satomi-kun…
Having been born with a weak body, Harumi was surprised by Koutarou’s strength.
Oh?
As Harumi relaxed, she suddenly felt a strange sense of unease.
The commotion at the starting point was still going on, so there weren’t many people running on the track, and the spectators were watching the two of them running.
“What’s the matter?”
“Well, Satomi-k—”
When she was about to respond to Koutarou next to her, she realized the reason for her unease.
“Senpai?”
“Ah, ahhh…”
Harumi was at a loss for words and her eyes opened wide in surprise.
Koutarou was much too close. She could feel his breath on her cheeks. She could feel his arms on her back.
And Harumi had her own arms around Koutarou’s neck, embracing him as her body tensed up.
“Oh, Senpai, please keep tensing up like that; it makes it easier to run.”
“Um… S-Satomi-kun? Ehh!?”
Koutarou sped up, oblivious to Harumi’s confusion.
As Harumi tensed up and her body got stiffer, it became easier for Koutarou to balance and speed up.
At the same time he put more force into his arms and pushed her closer to him.
And because of that, Harumi tensed up even more.
“L-Let me down, I can run on my own!”
“It’s okay, we’ll gain a bit of a lead with this!”
Flustered, Harumi tried to get off, but Koutarou shook his head.
It would be faster if Koutarou carried her for a while instead of her running on her own.
Koutarou wanted Harumi to finish the race, so he was planning on getting as far as he could like this.
“T-This is troubling me!”
“Why is that?”
“…”
Harumi was unable to respond; instead, her face became dyed red.

She was unable to say that being carried like this was embarrassing.
Moreover, she didn't dislike her current situation.
As she turned her face down, her heart began throbbing and she began to feel dizzy.
She was having trouble breathing. It might have been easier on her to run on her own.
"Just hold on tightly like that, please."
"...Um.. Excuse me!"
"Yes?"
"I-It's nothing!"
As always, Koutarou didn't notice Harumi's current state and kept running.
Because there was no one else running, the crowd began staring at Koutarou and Harumi.
"Ah, Ahh... Auuu..."
Harumi decided not to think about the glances she was getting.
If she didn't, she felt that her heart would explode.
"Alright, I'm in top condition today!"
"...I feel like I'm going to lose my mind..."
The public observed Koutarou carrying Harumi around the track and as they ran under the school gate, continuing along the course.

Part 5

As Koutarou left the schoolyard, the commotion at the starting point died down and the competitors started taking off.
"Dammit, that first-year brat won't get away with this!"
"You want to get him, judo club!?"
"Damn right! What about you, rugby club and sumo club!?"
"You don't even need to ask! I'll show him!"
"Gottsan desu!"
"I hate him stepping on me, but even more so for being with a woman!"
"That's right! Unforgivable! Damn envious!"
"Gottsan desu!"
While some were wresting with their emotions, most students had now left the starting point behind them.
However, there was one participant who hadn't started.
"Uu... Uuuuuuu..."
This person laid on the ground, staring up into the sky.
This person's partner had vanished in the commotion, and she was now all alone.
"W-Why does this always happen to me..."
She was wearing a black one piece with an apron on top and a white headdress. The supposedly beautiful outfit was covered in dirt and had several foot prints on it.
A footprint had been left on her face as well.
She had fallen during the commotion, and the other competitors had trampled her.

“But I need to go, or I’ll lose even more points… Uuu…”
That person slowly stood back up.
After standing up, she tried to brush off dirt from her outfit, but even then the footprints would not disappear.
“F-Fight! Y-Yurika Fight! Fight!”
Her name was Nijino Yurika.
It was the girl known for her excessive cosplay hobby.
Eventually, Yurika dragged her body forwards and began shakily running.
“I at least wanted to show it to someone before it got dirty…”
Just up until a moment ago, she had been close to tears due to being forced to wear her outfit and make-up, but now that it had gotten dirty it seemed that she had changed her mind.
However, even Yurika’s tears seemed like some sort of joke with that footprint on her face.
The first obstacle was 500 meters away from the starting line.
After running half of the 400 meter long track and exiting the school, this meant that the first obstacle was roughly 300 meters away.
It was next to a playground by the foot of a small mountain.
After passing by the first obstacle, the course continued onto a promenade into the beach district.
The course then continued along the road along the coast.
And there were obstacles placed along the parks and resting areas along the way.
Koutarou reached the first obstacle around the same time Theia had passed it.
Theia showed a provocative smile as she continued running.
“Hahaha, you’re finally here, pleb! But at this rate, you have no chance of beating me! You’d do best to give up early on!”
“Shut up, Tulip! As if I’d lose to the likes of you!”
“Your mouth sure flaps a lot! I’d like to teach you a lesson but I don’t have time to play with you now! I have to chase after Kiriha!”
Theia said so and began to run.
Once she started running she no longer turned back to look at Koutarou.
“Crap, Kiriha is already up ahead!? Senpai—”
“Yes!”
Koutarou put Harumi down on the ground and approached the first obstacle.
And Harumi followed behind him.
Sanae, who had been following after Koutarou, looked at Theia for a moment before following after Koutarou.
The obstacle at the playground was a math problem.
There were several desks that had been prepared in the playground, and they had to solve 10 easy math problems.
And they were not allowed to continue until they had correctly solved all of them.
The option of giving up was also possible, but in that case the competitor would be forced to wait one minute for each problem they were unable to solve.

It was a rule to prevent competitors from getting stuck on an obstacle for too long.
“Ahh, I don’t get it. Help me, Kiri-chan!”
There was already someone sitting by a desk.
That would be Kiriha’s partner, Takahashi.
Since she was less intelligent, she had been left behind by Kiriha.
She was desperately working away at the problems, but she had only solved half of the problems so far.
At this rate she would probably be forced to give up.
Koutarou took a seat next to her, picked up a pencil and got to work on solving the problems and Harumi did the same.
“Come on Koutarou, don’t space out! Hurry up and solve it! Theia has already gone ahead!”
“Let’s see here… 5682 + 7940 is…? Wow, what a pain…”
All ten problems were math problems at elementary school level.
However, the numbers were larger, making it a pain to calculate.
“Damn, I wish I had a calculator… 2 then 4 and 8 then carry one into 9 and 6 and 1…”
Koutarou was bad at calculating, so he slowly counted using his fingers.
“That’s so easy! Just hurry up and solve it!”
“Don’t just call out to me all of a sudden, I’ll lose track of where I am!”
“Geez…”
Sanae floated in front of Koutarou, crossed her arms and puffed up her cheeks.
She was getting frustrated when Koutarou couldn’t solve a problem even she could solve easily.
Sanae’s points were riding on Koutarou’s success, so she couldn’t help herself.
“Alright, next one is…”
And when Koutarou had solved his third problem, Harumi, who was next to him put down her pencil.
“I’m done.”
“Eh, you’re already done!?”
“Yes. What about you, Satomi-kun?”
“I still have a ways to go. Go on ahead please, senpai.”
“But…”
Harumi peeked at Koutarou’s problems; she couldn’t just leave him behind.
Koutarou noticed this and smiled as he called out to her.
“Go on without me, please. I’ll catch up with you right away!”
“Satomi-kun…”
“You’re finishing the race right, Sakuraba-senpai? If you bother too much with me, you might not be able to finish.”
Though Harumi was hesitating, as soon as Koutarou mentioned finishing she nodded her head.
“I understand. I’ll go on ahead. But in return, promise me this.”
“Yes?”
“When I get stuck, leave me behind too.”
“I understand, I promise.”

Koutarou agreed without hesitation.
He wanted her to run at her own pace and put her up on the podium. In order to do that, he needed to leave her on her own as well.
If Harumi was forced to run at Koutarou's pace, she would eventually collapse.
They would eventually need to run separately.
"Then we'll meet each other later."
"Let's finish this, senpai!"
"Yes, Satomi-kun!"
Harumi left a smile behind and handed her paper to the committee member in charge of this obstacle.
"Senpai..."
Her smile was more positive and powerful than ever.
Seeing her smile, Koutarou wanted to put her on the podium even more.
Because of that, he needed to make sure he caught up to Theia and Kiriha no matter what.
"Hey, was that girl your girlfriend?"
At that moment Takahashi, who sat next to Koutarou, pulled on his gym outfit.
"Ahaha, that would be nice..."
Koutarou smiled wryly and dropped his shoulders.
"...You don't see many with that personality nowadays. You should get her while you can!"
"I'd love too, but I'd feel bad for senpai if she was stuck with someone rough like me."
"Ahaha, I don't see many with your personality either!"
"Really?"
Koutarou and Takahashi laughed and then continued to solve the problems.
As Koutarou began working on the final problem, Sanae, who had kept quiet up until now, opened her mouth.
"You really are stupid, you know..."
"Just leave me alone!"
"Why do you need to spend so much time on problems like these? Geez!"
Sanae complained as several participants arrived at the first obstacle.
As Koutarou was struggling with the calculations, many participants had caught up, and several had already gotten past.
Takahashi from the girl's track and field team had completed the obstacle just a few moments ago.
"I'll be going ahead, Satomi-kun!"
"Uhahaha, I'll be going on ahead Kou! The lunch is mine now!"
Before Koutarou could finish solving the last problem, Shizuka and Kenji left their desks.
Although they had arrived after Koutarou, since they had no problems calculating they were done in an instant.
"You two are already done!?"
"You're just too slow!"
"See ya!"
"Uwa, Kasagi-san, wait for me!"

“Geez, I’ll tell you the answer already!”
“You can’t, Sanae!”
Sanae panicked as Kenji and Shizuka left and attempted to give Koutarou the answer, but he swiftly blocked her mouth.
“Fugagaga! Fugaugaga!?”
What does it matter! We’ll lose at this rate!
Sanae protested with her eyes, but Koutarou simply shook his head.
“You can’t. This isn’t just between us.”
If this had just been about Koutarou and the invaders, he might have listened to Sanae.
However, Koutarou wanted Harumi to win, and he didn’t want to do that by cheating. She wouldn’t be satisfied with that either.
On top of that, there was the bet with Kenji and Shizuka.
He couldn’t simple just let Sanae answer for him.
As Sanae heard Koutarou’s response, she pulled his hand away from her mouth.
“Then hurry up already!”
“I know, I know. Don’t rush me!”
Koutarou continued solving the last problem.
“Geez, you’re not just stupid but stubborn as well!”
Sanae let out an amazed voice.
But… Friends are a nice thing…
On the other hand, Sanae was envious of Koutarou’s relationships.
“You can do it, Koutarou, there’re probably no more than ten people in front of you!”
“Yeah!”

Part 6

Koutarou dashed onto the road with Sanae cheering for him.
The road Koutarou was running had hedges on either side.
On top of that, it was properly cleaned and gave off a nice atmosphere.
Around this time in the middle of May, the sunlight was strong and the temperature was high.
However, the gentle breeze from the sea cancelled that out. As Koutarou was running, he didn’t feel that much heat.
“If we keep going at this pace, we might win!”
“It would be nice if that was the case…”
Koutarou had fallen behind because of the first obstacle. After that, things went more smoothly.
However…
The second obstacle was throwing a ball a certain distance and the third was carrying a ping pong ball with a spoon. Koutarou had completed them both on the first try, and he was gradually passing by the other competitors.
“Koutarou, look up, it’s Theia! We’ve caught up!”
“Great, we’ll get past her on the next obstacle!”

And just before the fourth obstacle, Koutarou had finally caught up to Theia.
Theia was also doing well, but she had fallen behind on the third obstacle.
In reality, having been brought up as a princess, she was rather clumsy.
And since she was an alien, she was pretty bad at events she had never done before.
“Is that you, pleb!? Tsk, to think you’ve already caught up!”
“Wahahaha, you’d be better off if you had longer legs!”
Noticing Koutarou, Theia slightly increased her pace.
Koutarou also raised his pace and pursued her.
And with the fourth obstacle in front of them, they hurried along.
“Even though you’re my vassal, you’re always like this! Why are you always so harsh on me!?”
“Because I don’t want to be your servant!”
“Why don’t you learn from the cheerleading squad, you incompetent servant! They became my vassals after you, but they’re already dedicated to me!”
“I refuse, you spoiled princess!”
“Whaaat!?”
“You two never change…”
“As if I’d change! Me and Koutarou are having an important discussion!”
“This is a crucial moment! I’ll reform this idiot’s personality!”
Though the two were blaming each other, when Sanae complained they replied in perfect harmony.
“…But wouldn’t it be easier to run if you’re not talking?”
“How could I run if I throw away my pride!?”
“That’s right! How could I just let this idiot keep talking!?”
“…You two really are…”
Wouldn’t the two of them actually get along really well?
If she had said that, they would deny it immediately, but she couldn’t help but feel that way.
“Wahahaha, It’s my victory, Tulip!”
As they reach the ballpark where the fourth obstacle was, Koutarou declared his victory.
“What was that!? This can still go either way!”
“No, it’s my win! It seems fate favored me!”
There was a reason for Koutarou’s declaration.
The fourth obstacle was speed eating jam-filled bread.
This left Koutarou at an advantage.
“Koutarou has an endless stomach, after all. This’ll be easy.”
“So this was an event for dirty lower class citizens!?”
“Shut up!”
“You are my vassal, right!? Please eat with grace! If you just stuff your mouth you’ll embarrass me! I could even wait here for a moment if you’d like!”
“That’s none of your business!”
As they entered the ballpark, Koutarou and Theia were given a jam-filled bread each.
Compared to Koutarou’s, Theia’s bread was slightly smaller.

It was a handicap for women.
“Ahhh, don’t just stuff it into your mouth! Take smaller bites and eat it gracefully!”
“Are you stupid!? As if I’d waste time on that in the middle of a race!”
Koutarou ignored Theia’s complaints and stuffed his face with the bread.
“Waaa!! Would you think of my position for one moment pleb!? I’m ashamed to have such an embarrassing vassal!”
As if I caaaare!
And as Koutarou was chewing the bread in his mouth, another voice called out to Koutarou.
“Satomi-kun!”
“Saku…chomp…ba…chomp…pai!”
The voice belonged to Harumi.
She was tearing off small bits of the bread and putting it in her mouth.
“Like that, gracefully chewing like that is how the upper class— Hey, I’m not done talking to you, pleb!”
“Se…chomp…ai!”
“Ku, that woman again!? Curse you, Sakuraba Harumi! That man is my vassal!”
Theia stomped her feet irritatedly.
“There’s no need to be so jealous.”
“Who are you calling jealous! That plebeian belongs to me! I’m just angry he’s been taken away!”
“That’s what they call jealousy.”
“You’re wrong!”
Theia, who had gotten so excited her face turned red, put too much force into her hand and altered the shape of her bread.
Oblivious to Theia’s feelings, Koutarou ran off to Harumi.
Koutarou swallowed the bread he was chewing on and began talking to Harumi.
“Senpai, it looks like you’re putting up quite the fight.”
“I had a hard time throwing the ball, but I’ve managed so far…”
Though Harumi was weak, she was able to clear the third obstacle without any problem.
The lead she had gained there made up for her slow speed, and she had gotten there before Theia.
“But I’m not good with this obstacle…”
“Yes, you look like you’d be bad with this kind of thing, senpai.”
Though things had gone smoothly for Harumi, the speed eating had stopped her.
On top of having a weak constitution and being slow to eat, she had no appetite after running for so long.
Because of that, despite having arrived at the fourth obstacle some time ago, she still had more than half of her bread left.
“How about you, Satomi-kun?”
“I just finished eating.”
“Boys really are amazing…”
“This is my only specialty…”

“Fufu, I’m quite envious.”
Harumi put on a small smile and showed her bread.
“Satomi-kun, don’t mind me and continue on ahead. It’s going to take me a while longer.”
“But—”
“That was our promise, Satomi-kun!”
That’s right. I should let senpai run at her own pace… If I rush her she might not be able to finish…
“Got it, senpai. Please make sure you catch up later, okay?”
“Yes, I promise.”
Harumi nodded greatly and continued eating her bread.
“Then I’ll go on ahead.”
“Good luck, Satomi-kun.”
“You too, senpai.”
“Ah, wait up, Koutarou!”
“Don’t leave me behind, pleb!”
Koutarou left Harumi behind and continued running towards the next obstacle.

Part 7
Harumi didn’t leave the fourth obstacle until several minutes after Koutarou.
During that time, several participants had passed her and she had fallen far behind.
“I figured this would happen…”
Despite running on the marathon course, several participants passed her, and by the time she had cleared the fifth obstacle she was in last place.
“But I promised Satomi-kun I’d finish, so I need to give it my all!”
However, Harumi was still cheerful and smiled as she steadily ran on the course.
“Only half of the course left, I can do this!”
Satomi-kun will be waiting for me at the goal!
The newest member of the knitting society was waiting for her by the goal.
With that in her mind, Harumi was able to continue running.
“Uuu, I can’t run any further…”
Unlike Harumi, the person next to her looked like she was about to give up any moment now.
She had a gloomy expression, her body was wavering and her steps were heavy.
Despite sharing last place, they were complete opposites.
“R-Retire, that’s right, I just need to retire and this will end…! B-But if I retire my tatami will…! But I have no chance of catching up now! I can just drop out and rest, right? I gave it my all…”
This person had only experienced misfortune since the starting point.
She had fallen over and several participants had trampled her.
She had struggled with the calculations at the first obstacle. On the second obstacle, she had set a new low record of two meters.
At the third obstacle, she had dropped the ping pong ball five times. At the fourth obstacle, she had dropped her bread and it had been covered in dirt.

At the fifth obstacle, which was vaulting, she had failed her landing and planted her face into the ground.
“I’m at my limit… I’m overheating… Aha, ahahaha…”
Her name was Nijino Yurika.
She was a self-proclaimed magical girl fighting on her own.
Yurika was wavering so much she was unable to run straight.
Her sweat had messed up her make-up and her maid outfit was covered in dirt. Nothing of her previously beautiful look was left.
She was at her limit, both physically and mentally. She looked like she would fall apart at any moment.
“I can’t…”
“Hang in there.”
“…?”
As Yurika was about to fall over, Harumi had gently held her up.
“T-Thank you very much. B-But it’s fine. I’ll just retire here…”
“Don’t give up, please; you’ve already completed half of the course!”
Harumi desperately tried to encourage Yurika while keeping her from falling over.
Harumi couldn’t leave Yurika who was sharing last place on her own.
“I can’t win, nobody is looking and nobody will praise me…”
“You can’t. If you give up here, you will have lost to yourself. Even if nobody else is looking, you’re still looking at yourself… Besides, I’m here with you. If you stop, I’ll be sad.”
“Ah…”
After hearing those powerful and kind words, Yurika began to see a small glimmer of hope.
Having gone for so long without anyone listening to her, Harumi’s gentle voice worked wonders.
“Now, stand up! If you give up here, you’ll lose to yourself in the future too!”
I’ll lose to myself again… I can’t have that happen!
Yurika clenched her teeth and poured force into her body.
Doing that her body began to feel light again.
“I…!?”
It was a mysterious feeling for Yurika.
Harumi hadn’t used magic, but power returned to Yurika.
“Hang in there, put power into your legs!”
“Y-Yes!”
Yurika was able to recollect herself thanks to Harumi.
Though she had given up, Yurika now felt that she could continue fighting.
“…Um, thank you very much!”
Yurika deeply bowed to Harumi.
She was grateful from the bottom of her heart.
She was only able to continue thanks to Harumi.
“That’s okay; when we’re in trouble we should help each other out.”

To Harumi, who had a weak constitution, this was normal for her.
She knew how painful it could be, more than anyone, and that's why she couldn't just leave Yurika on her own.
She's so strong… She's probably several times stronger than me.
That was how Yurika felt as she looked at Harumi smiling.
Although Harumi had no power, Yurika felt she would lose to her.
And she admired her for that. She wanted to be like her.
"I'm Sakuraba Harumi. And you are?"
"Y-Yurika! Nijino Yurika!"
Though they had barely missed each other a couple of times, this was the first time they had properly met.

Part 8

As Harumi and Yurika met, the lead group had now reached the eighth obstacle.
The first one to reach it was Kiriha.
She had managed to preserve the lead she had gained from the start.
Being able to do everything well, this kind of event suited her just fine.
"The eight obstacle is…"
But as Kiriha looked around the eighth obstacle, a couple of people came running up.
"There she is! That girl is the leader!"
"We finally caught up!"
"Not good, they finally closed the gap…"
She had lost steam since the start of the race, and her speed had dropped.
That was why the participants with stamina to spare had been able to catch up to her.
The soccer club and the boy's track and field team, several clubs that required stamina, had caught up.
"Oh, it's Kurano-san."
"Kurano-san? Ah, it's true."
Shizuka and Kenji were among the participants that had caught up.
The two of them seemed to have struggled quite a bit. Kenji's stage outfit and Shizuka's apron were both covered in dirt.
The two ran up to Kiriha with smiles.
"Welcome, you two."
"I finally caught up to you, Kurano-san!"
"To think I'm almost losing to girls… Kurano-san and Kasagi-san, you two are amazing."
Kenji found himself impressed with the two girls.
He was confident in his stamina since he had been in the baseball club along with Koutarou.
Despite that, two of his female classmates had been running in front of him.
"Fufu, well, you did catch up."
Kiriha smiled at Kenji, but she was actually relieved.
As I thought, Kasagi Shizuka is not normal… I'm happy she's not my opponent…

Unaware how Kiriha felt about her, Shizuka happily looked at the eighth obstacle.
At the halfway point of the marathon course, it turned around and headed back towards the school.
Because of that, the eighth obstacle was by a vacant lot next to the school.
“So the eighth obstacle is a balancing beam… But it seems pretty long.”
There were five long beams at the eighth obstacle.
The beams were on average about 30 meters long, and specially-made.
From here, the participants needed to select one of the beams and cross over, but that selection was a difficult one.
The five beams varied in thickness.
The middle one had a standard thickness, and there were two thicker and two thinner beams.
It didn’t need to be said that the thinner the beam, the harder it would be to cross.
But it wasn’t just a simple matter of choosing a thicker beam.
Depending on the thickness of the beam, the path branched off.
The thicker the beam was, the longer the detour.
If they fell off the beam, the participants would be covered in white powder, and the thicker the beam was, the longer the course they would have to run again.
So choosing the right balancing beam was very important.
Would participants pick a thinner beam to gain a lead, or play it safe and pick a thicker beam?
It was an important selection that would influence the development of the marathon.
“I’m at a loss… Mackenzie-kun, what beam will you cross?”
“Hmm… I’m thinking of the middle one. It’s not too hard and it’s not too long.”
“You’re quite the careful one, Matsudaira-san.”
“Well…”
As Kenji lets out an embarrassed laugh, a loud voice could be heard from afar.
Hearing that voice, the three stopped moving towards the beams.
“Why would you swear loyalty to that weak woman over me!?”
“It’s because of your small heart! How about you show a bit of self-awareness, Tulip!?”
“What!? Try saying that again, you stupid vassal!”
“I’ll say it as many times as I have to! Your size, breasts, and heart are small! You useless princess!”
“My size and breasts have nothing to do with it! Take back those insults!”
“I’m so sorry, you useless princess! The only thing small is your heart! Are you satisfied now!?”
“You’re not putting any feelings into it! It doesn’t sound like an apology at all!”
“Of course it doesn’t! I have no intention of actually apologizing!”
“You… You have something to say, you useless vassal!? Take this! And that!”
“Ow, Owow! You want to fight!?”
Koutarou and Theia came running whilst shouting at each other.
Sanae was next to them, but Kenji and Shizuka were unable to see her.
Koutarou and Theia would bump shoulders and kick each other as they ran.
They would probably have been able to run faster if they didn’t, but those two were stubborn and just kept doing it.

Despite that, the speed they were running at was quite fast.
With a rival at their side, they refused to lose.
“Kou!? That idiot’s already caught up! And Theia-san is with him!?”
“Hmm… as expected from Satomi-kun.”
“The only thing he has is strength and stamina, after all…”
When he saw Koutarou, Kenji changed his mind on what beam to cross.
Koutarou is just reckless; he’ll definitely pick the thinnest beam! So I’ll pick the second thinnest one!
I’ll give up on the safe play!
Kenji, who had been planning on taking the middle beam, was unable to take it slow now that Koutarou was closing in.
He instead decided to take the balancing beam next to his and cross it as fast as he could.
“I’ll be going on ahead, Mackenzie-kun!”
“Kasagi-san!?”
However, Shizuka got on it before he could.
She was thinking the same thing he was.
Kenji hurriedly followed after her.
However, Kiriha had something else in mind.
“Alright.”
Instead of crossing a beam with others on it, I’ll pick one I can get right across! With no one in my way I can easily make up for the time lost on the detour! Even if I can’t, there’s still the ninth and tenth obstacle!
Kiriha began crossing the middle beam that Kenji and Shizuka had planned on crossing.
Even if Shizuka and Kenji hurried, they couldn’t get past the people in front of them.
Which was why Kiriha had picked the middle beam no one was crossing.
She was planning on dashing through it.
The beam was longer, but she figured that she would be able to cross it faster with nobody in the way.
“It’s a balancing beam! This must be hard for you since you’re so unbalanced, Theia!”
“Just keep barking, plebeian! I’ll show you the difference between us!”
Koutarou and Theia arrived at the obstacle.
And just as Kenji had predicted, Koutarou went for the smallest beam.
Koutarou was not one for petty tricks and went for the shortest path.
“Hurry up and cross it, Koutarou! We’re close the goal now!”
“Leave it to me!”
Based on the situation it looked like Theia would follow after Koutarou, but instead she went for the thickest beam.
“Hey, Koutarou.”
“Hm?”
“Theia went that way.”
“…You’re right. That’s quite timid of you, Princess Tulip!”
Even though Koutarou was provoking her, Theia showed no signs of anger.

“Kukuku. More haste, less speed: I’ve only adhered to that proverb. Impatience is unfitting for royalty!”
Theia smiled as she began crossing the beam.
Because of the thickness of the beam, there was next to no chance of losing balance.
And Theia was able to move several times faster than Koutarou.
Amongst them, the first one to cross the halfway point was Kiriha.
Following her was Theia, Shizuka and Kenji in that order.
Koutarou was the last of the five.
He had joined in later, and the thin beam had made it difficult to cross.

Part 9

And although it looked like it was a just a simple matter of crossing the beam, an unexpected ambush happened.
“There they are! It’s the leaders!”
“We’ve finally caught up! Now where is that first-year brat!?”
“Gottsan desu!”
It was the three upperclassmen Koutarou had stepped on at the start.
The rugby club, the judo club and the sumo club.
The men who were burning with anger approached the balancing beams.
“Uwa, they’re here!?”
Sensing a hostile aura from behind, Koutarou turned his head to look.
Though Koutarou was quick to forget, he clearly remembered those distinct uniforms he had used as stepping stones at the start of the marathon.
“Koutarou, it’s those three! It looks like they’re looking for you! What do we do!?”
“Even if you say that…”
Not good!
Koutarou turned his face down and tensed up.
He was hoping to cross the beam before they found him.
“Damn! Where is that brat!?”
“You don’t remember, rugby club!?”
“It was just for an instant, so not clearly…”
However, the three men were quicker to forget than Koutarou.
None of them remembered his face.
“Alright! Luck is on our side!”
Lucky!
As Sanae cheered, Koutarou celebrated on the inside as he crossed the beam, trying not to stand out.
“Gottsan desu!”
“Hm? What is it, sumo club?”
“Gottsan desu!”

“What? He was with a woman at the time? That’s right, good thing the sumo club doesn’t admit women! You noticed just the right thing!”

“Rugby club! Over there! The only one with a woman is that guy! We’ve finally found him!”

“Good work! It’s time for revenge!”

“Gottsan desu!”

The three set their eyes on a certain male student on top of a balancing beam.

“Mackenzie-kun, something strange is happening behind us…”

“Eh…?”

Of course, the person they had set their eyes on was Kenji, who was with Shizuka.

“Heey! First-year brat! How dare you use us as stepping stones!”

“And with a woman! I’m so envious!”

“Gottsan desu!”

The earth shook as the three giant men headed towards the beam.

Several students who planned on crossing the beam got out of their way.

“You can’t run away any more!!”

“W-What’s wrong!? Just what is going on!?”

Kenji, who didn’t have a grasp of the situation, tilted his head as the beam shook as the three men approached him.

Why are they so angry!? And why are they closing in on me!?

They had mixed him up with Koutarou, so Kenji had no idea of what was going on.

“Are you trying to play stupid!? Don’t tell me you forgot stepping on us at the start line!!”

“That alone is enough to punish you, but what’s with you!? You’re even with such a cute girl! I’m so envious!!”

“Gottsan desu!”

“You’ve made some kind of mistake! I haven’t stepped on you at all!

“You’re the only one with a woman! You can’t fool us!”

“You heard him! Introduce us, you bastard!”

“Gottsan desu!”

Kenji desperately tried to persuade the three behind him, but they wouldn’t listen to a word he said. They slowly closed in on him.

“T-They’re here!”

“Kyahaha, stop touching me in strange places, Mackenzie-kun!”

“S-Sorry!”
Kenji tried to run up ahead. but with Shizuka in the way, he was stuck.
“Dammit you first-year brat! What kind of envious things are you doing in this situation!?”
“That’s it, I’ve had it! What’s with this difference in response, just because you have good looks!?”
“Gottsan desu!”
To the three men, capturing Kenji had a higher priority than winning the race, so they didn’t mind falling off the balancing beam.
That’s why they were crossing the beam much faster than Kenji and Shizuka.
At this rate it was only a matter of time before they caught up to Kenji.
“Oh dear, sorry Mackenzie.”
As Koutarou looked at the three men approaching Kenji, he put his hands together.
“…Koutarou, you really are sly!”
“You think so?”
“Ah, so that’s how it is! It’s your fault, isn’t it, Kou!?”
Looking at Koutarou putting his hands, together it suddenly struck Kenji.
The three men were chasing after a boy/girl team that had gotten an early lead.
The only team who fit into that criteria was Koutarou and Harumi.
“Don’t try to involve innocent people, Mackenzie-kun!”
“Oh dear, how impudent of you… You’re the one who involved them…”
“That was that and this is this. Surely you don’t want to lose, Sanae-kun!”
“Well that’s true… Now that I think about it, you’ve always been an awful person…”
“You think so?”
Sanae gave Koutarou a cold glance.
However, Koutarou was indifferent.
“He’s right! Don’t be so unsightly, you first-year brat!”
“You’re wrong! That guy, Kou, is the true culprit!”
“That brat is on his own, and unpopular no matter how you look at it! You’re a terrible liar!”
“Gottsan desu!”
Despite Kenji desperately trying to persuade them, the three men showed no signs of taking their eyes of Kenji and they had now closed the distance to a few meters.
At that point, Kenji finally made up his mind.
“…At this point, I’ll get caught and fall off the balancing beam! That’s why I’m taking you with me, Kou!”
“What are you trying to do!?”
“This!”
The next moment, Kenji jumped off the beam and tried to kick Koutarou, who was crossing next to him.
It was Kenji’s attempt at a recovery.
Rather than being thrown off by the three men, he would kick Koutarou off his beam and then make a run for the marathon course, losing the three men.

Though he might lose to Shizuka, as long as he didn't lose to Koutarou, there were no problems.
This was the best plan he had to come out on top in his current situation.
"Take this!"
"Look out, Koutarou! Dodge it!"
Being childhood friends, Koutarou and Kenji were no strangers to fistfights.
Which was why as soon as Kenji jumped, Koutarou prepared to intercept him.
I'm on top of a balancing beam with poor footing, and my opponent is coming at me with a flying kick. I have no way of blocking it!
"In that case, what if I do this!?"
Koutarou swung his right arm and hit Kenji's extended foot.
"Nuaaaah!?"
Because of that, Kenji's aim was thrown off, and he fell towards the mat covered in white powder.
"Uaahhh!?"
Having deflected Kenji's attack, Koutarou lost his balance and was now desperately waving his arms, trying to regain it.
"Don't think you've won just yet!"
However, just before Kenji fell onto the mat, he reached out his hand.
He was planning on grabbing Koutarou's flailing arm and dragging him down.
"Koutarou, watch out for the hand!"
"Damn you, Mackenzie!"
"Wahahaha, Kou, I'm taking you down wi—"
Just before Kenji reached Koutarou, his foot touched the mat.
However, that didn't matter to him, as long as he could grab Koutarou's arm.
Kenji's plan was flawless. His quick decision-making when cornered, the following flying kick, and even reaching out his hand at the last moment were all according to plan.
...Normally anyways.
BOOM!
However, regardless of how amazing Kenji was, he had no chance against the sudden explosion at his feet.
Because of the tiny explosion, Kenji vanished.
And Koutarou, who was on the verge of losing his footing, was fortunately pushed by the following shock wave and regained his balance.
"W-What!? What just happened!?"
However, despite having regained his balance, Koutarou was in shock from the sudden explosion.
"W-W-Wha?"
"Koutarou, are you okay!?"
"Satomi-kun, what about Mackenzie-kun!?"
Of course, Koutarou wasn't the only one who was shocked.
Sanae, Kiriha, and Shizuka were equally surprised.

And Kenji, who had been involved in the explosion, had no time to be surprised as he rolled along the mat.
There were very few who weren't surprised by the sudden event.
"Hey, the drama club member with the girl just exploded!"
"What!? The kind of guy you'd find at a club was blown away!?"
"Gottsan desu!"
"Did you hear!? The playboy bastard with glasses just self-destructed!"
"What!? He failed at seducing a woman!?"
"That's what I like to hear!"
Several men at the obstacle chimed in.
"Hooray, hooray, hooray!"
And they cheered with smiles on their faces.
"Ohohohoho!"
There was one more person who wasn't surprised by this situation.
"How frightening! This is why barbarians at the fringe of the universe are so frightening! To think they would bury landmines just to win at a sports festival! Truly frightening!"
The person who was laughing loudly on the furthest away beam was none other than the seventh princess of the Holy Forthorthe Galactic Empire, Theiamillis Gre Forthorthe.
"Landmines!? You mean this is your doing, Tulip!?"
Hearing her high pitched laugh, Koutarou was certain she was behind the mines.
"Ohohoho! I have no idea what you're talking about! Keep your false accusations to yourself!
However, Theia was feigning ignorance.
There was no evidence, so Theia was quite confident.
"Quit lying! The only ones who would do something as annoying as this are you and Sanae!"
"Wait just a minute! Why am I included in this!? You take that back and say you believe me more than anything!"
"C-Calm down, it's just a figure of speech!"
Being grouped up with Theia angered Sanae, and she began shaking Koutarou's head.
Since he was still on top of the beam, Koutarou tried desperately not to fall off.
At this point, a famous foreign song began playing.
The source of the song was the cellphone in Koutarou's pocket.
It was the theme song from a popular secret service movie.
Koutarou had set that as his ring tone whenever he got a call from Ruth.
"You need to stop taking me for a troublemaker!"
"W-Wait, I've got a call from Ruth!"
"Do you think you can fool me with that!?"
"Just be fooled for now!"
While being shaken by Sanae, Koutarou pulled his cellphone out and answered the call.
"R-Ruth-san!"
"Satomi-sama!"

Ruth's hasty voice could be heard from the cellphone.
She was speaking rapidly, and her voice was trembling.
"Damn! Did Ruth catch on!?"
Sensing that Ruth was on the phone with Koutarou, Theia's confident smile vanished.
"I have terrible news, Satomi-sama! 128 neutralizing mines are missing from Blue Knight's—"
"Blue Knight, commence wide area jamming! Shut down all communication!"
"AS YOU WISH, MY PRINCESS."
However, Ruth's voice stopped mid-sentence.
"Ruth-san, what was that about landmines!? Ruth-san!?"
Flustered, Koutarou called out to Ruth repeatedly, but the call ended with a beep.
He tried to call her back, but he was unable to connect to her.
The cellphone's display showed a no signal message.
"No signal!? Impossible, why would this...?"
"It's Theia! She's doing something again!"
"Dammit, Tulip! What's the meaning of this!? What did she mean by 128 mines!?"
"How terrifying... If 128 neutralizing mines really are buried here nobody would be able to escape. Terrorism really is terrifying!"
"You bastard, you think you can just play stupid!?"
"Koutarou, I don't think you have to right to say that..."
Koutarou ground his teeth, but Theia showed a confident smile.
Based on the situation, it was clear that Theia was the culprit, but there was no real evidence.
"What will you do now, pleb!? Do you dare advance knowing there are landmines below you!?"
"You bastard..."
Theia boasted of her triumph.
It was just as she said. Knowing that they could fall into landmines, nobody would advance like before.
This held true the faster they went and the thinner the beam was.
Everybody stopped moving.
"Princess!"
"Ah, you finally caught up!"
Theia's partner, a member of the cheerleading squad, arrived at the obstacle.
"Hurry up and come to my side!"
"Hail to the princess!"
The cheerleading squad member began crossing the thickest beam without hesitation.
And not with the steps of someone being cautious of landmines below them.
They were powerful steps without hesitation.
"I got it! Theia-dono, there are no mines under that beam, correct?"
Kiriha pointed at the beam Theia was crossing and exclaimed.
"So that's why she went for the thickest beam!?"
"It was that kind of trap!? That's playing dirty, Tulip!"

“Ohohoho! Stop with your baseless accusations! I and the cheerleading squad are merely crossing the beam equipped with unbreakable will, unwavering courage, and absolute loyalty! You can stay while lamenting over your own weakness for as long as you’d like!”
Theia boasted triumphantly as she grouped up with the cheerleading squad.
“Let’s go! You and I will finish first and second!”
“Hail to the princess!”
Theia had taken 128 mines from the Blue Knight’s weapon storage.
They had been buried here yesterday night by the cheerleading squad.
The only safe passage was the thickest beam.
Anywhere else had been packed with mines.
You were too naive, plebeian and Kiriha! Did you think I would fall into your trap without any plans!?
This minefield had been set up as a counter measure due to Kiriha’s suspicious movements.
“Hey! It looks like there’s nothing set up under that beam over there!”
“So all we need to do is cross that!?”
“That’s it! Let’s go!”
“Cross it!”
“W-What!?”
However, something Theia had not planned for happened.
When the other students had realized that all other beams were no good, they all began to cross the beam Theia was on.
“U-uwa, c-can’t all of you cross it a little bit slower!?”
“P-Princess!”
Because a large amount of people began crossing the beam, it started shaking.
This caused troubles for the large cheerleading squad member.
Unable to control his high center of gravity due the shaking beam, he quickly lost his balance.
“Hey, keep it together!”
“But! Prin— Uwaaa!?”
“L-Let go of me, you fool! Ahhhh!”
And the cheerleading squad member fell off the beam, taking Theia with him.
Falling off of the beam, the cheerleading squad member and Theia turned pure white from the powder on the mat.
Theia got up in a fluster, grabbed the cheerleading squad member’s chest, and started shouting.
“You idiot! Why did you bring me with you!? If you’re falling, just fall on your—”
BOOM!
However, Theia was unable to finish scolding her partner because a landmine exploded by their feet.
“W-Why?...”
Blown away by the landmine, they rolled on the mat and turned pure white once again.
“I told you to keep the beam at the edge clear...”
“P-Princess, I was certain that you meant the beam for the handicapped...”

In the obstacle marathon, clubs involved with volunteer work also participated.
Because of that, students who had been injured and were using wheelchairs also participated.
Because of that, there was a special beam kept separate from the others for handicapped students, and the cheerleading squad had not planted any mines there.
This was because Theia had told them to keep the rightmost beam clear of mines.
Hearing that, the cheerleading squad had been moved by her kindness, but sadly, that was not her intention.
“You fo-fool… It seems the loyalty… and courage… brought unfavorable results… Ugh…”
“I am truly, so… Ugh.”
“Uwaaaa, there are bombs buried under this one too!”
“Turn around! Run away!”
“Don’t push! Stop pushing! I’ll fall!”
“The mines! The mines will…!”
The remaining students panicked.
They figured that the thickest beam was safe and had begun crossing all at once, but not even this beam was safe.
They no longer had anywhere to run.
It wasn’t just Koutarou and the others, but all of the students were now at a standstill on top of the beams.
However, with so many people being pushed around, that didn’t last for long.
“Waaaaa! I can’t keep it up!”
“Kyaaaaaaaa!”
“Mommyyyyyy!”
Several students fell from the beams, and looking at them, several more students lost their footing.
“Why!? Is this heavenly punishment for being too beautiful!?”
“I guess it’s always the same for ugly men no matter where they go!”
“Gottsan desu!”
Several flashes and explosions could be seen and heard at the eighth obstacle.
It could be described as a battlefield.
The only saving grace was that the neutralizing mines didn’t harm anyone, but for those caught in the explosion, that fact wasn’t of much help.

Part 10

Though there was a huge commotion at the eighth obstacle, that did not concern Harumi and Yurika, who had just passed the sixth obstacle.
They were still a kilometer away from the eight obstacle.
“Woah!”
“Are you okay, Nijino-san?”
“I’m okay, Sakuraba-senpai.”
“We still have a long way to go, so hang in there.”

“Yes, thank you very much!”
They encouraged each other as they dragged their heavy and tired bodies towards the goal.
The two girls running on the road created a very calm atmosphere, the complete opposite of the atmosphere at the eighth obstacle.
The two got along very well. Harumi, who was normally withdrawn, did not mind being with Yurika for some reason.
The reason might have been when she had met Yurika, she was struggling. Yurika also had a childish personality, and the fact that they were participating in the same marathon seemed to have all worked together and lowered Harumi’s guard.
And because Harumi actually listened, Yurika liked her as well.
In other words, it seemed like they would make good friends.
They both felt that it would be fine to just keep running towards the goal at their current pace.
“Sakuraba-senpai, why are you trying so hard?”
“Fuh… Hah… Actually, I promised my friend in my society that I’d finish the race.”
Harumi was breathing roughly as she answered Yurika’s question.
And her words would cut off from time to time due to her heavy breathing.
It seemed like she was about to reach her limit; however, even then, Harumi was smiling.
“That’s why… I want to… reach the goal. It’s a precious… promise with my friend…”
Having missed out on school a lot when she was younger, she had very few people she could call friends.
Which was why Koutarou held a special meaning to her.
Although the promise to reach the goal might not have meant much to him, it was a very important promise for Harumi herself.
“Friend… What kind of person is it?”
Harumi’s friend.
Not realizing it was Koutarou, Yurika asked Harumi.
“That’s—”
But Harumi’s words were cut off, and her legs stopped moving.
Yurika, who was running normally, took a few steps in front of Harumi.
“Sakuraba-senpai?”
As Yurika stopped and turned around, Harumi body started leaning.
“…”
Harumi’s face was pale and her pupils were shaking, as if she was trying to say something.
But Harumi didn’t say anything and instead looked at Yurika with an apologetic look and fell towards the concrete pavement.
“S-Sakuraba-senpai!!”
However, Harumi didn’t slam into the ground.
Yurika unexpectedly moved swiftly to catch Harumi.
“Please hang in there, Sakuraba-senpai!”
“…N-Nijino-san…”

Blood drained from Harumi's face. Her lips turned purple and her limbs were cold.
Though it wasn't impossible, it seemed a five kilometer marathon was too much for Harumi.
Despite having trained a bit, her body was still screaming.
Before she met Koutarou, Harumi might have retired halfway through.
However, Harumi had given it her all in order to fulfill her promise with Koutarou.
"So-sorry... I have... a weak body..."
"P-Please wait, I'll call for help right away!"
I need to hurry, or something terrible might happen!
Yurika understood that Harumi was far from okay.
Her face was pale and her breathing was rough.
And although her body temperature had dropped, her heart was throbbing.
Yurika, panicking, looked around her surroundings, but there was no one else around.
She tried to stand up to go find some help.
What stopped her was Harumi's weak voice and her cold hand grasping on to Yurika's hand.
"Niji... no-san... Sorry I couldn't... be with you... until the end..."
With those last words, Harumi lost consciousness.
The cold hand holding onto Yurika slowly let go and fell onto the ground.
"Sakuraba-senpai! Sakuraba-senpai!"
Despite Yurika desperately calling out to Harumi, she didn't regain her consciousness.
This is bad! There's no time to spare! In that case!...
Yurika gently put Harumi down on the concrete and stood up with a determined expression.
She extended her right arm and declared loudly.
"Come! Angel Halo!"
A blue spherical light appeared in front of Yurika's extended arm.
When the blue sphere of light vanished, a decorated staff was floating in its place.
As Yurika grabbed the floating staff, she grasped it with both of her hands and focused.
"Next is... Costume Change — Modifier Quicken — End — Permanent!"
When she raised the staff above her head, a blue flash covered her body, and her outfit instantly changed into another.
From the maid outfit into the magical girl outfit.
It was the outfit Yurika was wearing when she had first appeared in Room 106.
"Just wait a second, Sakuraba-senpai. This magical girl, Rainbow Yurika, will save you!"
After changing her outfit, she grabbed her staff and focused once more.
This time, she pointed the tip of the staff at Harumi's chest.
Harumi had her eyes closed and was not moving a muscle.
Being unconscious, she was unaware of what was happening around her.
"Remove Disease — Modifier Maximus!"
As Yurika shouted, the blue light from the cane wrapped around Harumi's body.
When Yurika used magic, there were seven different types of lights that could appear.
The blue light was when Yurika was trying to summon something.

All three spells she had used today had a blue light.
She was magical girl, Rainbow Yurika.
A magical girl able to use the seven colors of the rainbow.
Unfortunately, nobody was around to see her save the day.
However, at that point, Yurika didn't care about herself.
The only thing she was concerned with was saving Harumi.
"Wake up, Harumi-senpai!"
Yurika grasped the staff harder as she shouted.
And the blue light glowed brighter and covered Harumi in several layers.
Yurika desperately tried to wake Harumi up.
"You're going to reach the goal, right!? You made a promise with your friend, right!?"
"..."
However, Harumi showed no signs of opening her eyes.
She had been born with her sickness; it wasn't that simple of a task.
It wasn't something that could be cured right away, even using magic.
"I'll run with you! So please!"
Even then, Yurika kept calling out to Harumi with a loud voice.
Harumi was the one who had taught her not to give up.
"Ah!?"
Suddenly, something unexpected happened.
The light flowing from the staff started changing, almost as if responding to Yurika's voice.
"Eh!? W-What is this!? I've never heard of white magic!"
The light had turned from blue to pure white before she knew it.
And the light was shining much brighter than before.
It was almost as if a tiny sun had appeared, and the white light surrounded Yurika and Harumi.
"W-Why!? Even my own wounds!? And even the pain is gone!"
The magic Yurika had used on Harumi increased in power and started affecting not only Harumi, but Yurika as well.
Yurika had several wounds after being trampled, but when enveloped in the light they vanished as if nothing had ever happened.
Even her exhaustion weighing her body down disappeared.
"What is this!?"
Eventually, the light turned into a pillar extending to the sky.
And Yurika stood in the middle of the pillar with a blank look on her face.
"What is this power!?"
The magic Yurika had used on Harumi was only intended to cure a single person from their sickness.
It didn't have the power to affect multiple people, and definitely not heal their wounds and remove their exhaustion.
That was another spell entirely. On top of that, the effect was abnormal.
"Could this be the power concentrated in Room 106!?"

Yurika wasn't sure of the origin of this power either.
But she knew one thing for certain.
"No, the reason doesn't matter! With this much power, I can save Sakuraba-senpai!"
Harumi's pained look disappeared, and color returned to her face and limbs.
Her low body temperature returned to normal. Her pulse and breath slowed down.
The only important thing was that Harumi was okay.
Nothing else really mattered to Yurika at that point.

Part 11

"D-Dammit! I can't… lose here… I n-need to put… senpai on the podium!"
"Hang in there, Koutarou; you're almost there!"
Returning to the schoolyard, Koutarou's whole body was covered in wounds.
Koutarou was unable to walk straight, and it was only a matter of time before he passed out and collapsed.
He was using a branch he picked up on his way as a cane and almost dragged his body under the school gate.
As Koutarou entered the schoolyard, the audience on the bleachers stood up.
Although he was struggling, he was currently in first place.
Despite the obstacle marathon being an annual race, the Knitting Society had never taken first place before.
Because of that, the tension of the audience in the schoolyard was at an all-time high.
However, even their loud shouts of joy were unable to reach Koutarou's ears.
"Just a little bit more, the goal is so close…"
"Look, it's the tenth obstacle! It's only 30 meters away!"
The only voice that reached the exhausted Koutarou was Sanae's.
He was only relying on her words as he dragged his legs forwards.
The reason Koutarou was in this state was because of the minefield at the eighth obstacle.
The ninth obstacle only served to worsen his current state.
However, Koutarou didn't fall because he wanted Harumi to win and because of Sanae cheering him on.
Without that, he would have collapsed long ago.
"If you do that you're done!"
"Done? I-I'm already done?"
However, Koutarou made a big mistake.
He had missed part of what Sanae told him, thinking she had said "You're done".
"Waa, Koutarou, no, you can't stop now!"
"I'm finally done…"
Usually, this small mistake wouldn't be any problems.
But for Koutarou, who had reached his limits, once he lost his will there was no coming back.
Koutarou's body shut down and he simply fell down with a satisfied smile on his face.

“I did it!”
“You didn’t! Would you listen to me!?”
“Uhehehe, you don’t have to praise me that much, Sanae…”
“I’m not!”
Sanae’s screams were in vain as Koutarou shut his eyes.
Being exhausted, Koutarou had already lost his consciousness.
“Zzzz…”
Having passed out, Koutarou had an expression of relief.
It was the expression of a man who had completed his task.
“Why are you falling asleep with such a satisfied smile!? What are you going to do about my tatami!?”
However, to Sanae, Koutarou’s relieved expression and satisfied smile were truly unpleasant.
When Koutarou who had dominated first place collapsed, the schoolyard fell into disarray, and the commenter raises his voice in response.
“Oh, this looks to be big trouble! The Knitting Society’s representative Satomi Koutarou went down just before the tenth obstacle! The nearby committee member is shaking his head! It seems like he’s completely passed out!”
And before the female commentator could finish, the crowd’s tension rose once again as the second place and third place participants entered the schoolyard.
“There you are, Sanae! Koutarou is… Aha, after coming this far he passed out! That’s alright; as my vassal, when I win you will be rewarded as well!”
“Which means the winner between the two of us will be declared victor…”
Theia and Kiriha entered the schoolyard.
There must have been quite a large gap between them and the rest of the participants because no one else could be seen.
As they entered the schoolyard, cheers start pouring down from the bleachers.
“Kurano-san! You can do it!”
“Kiriha-chan! Win this and capture the funds for the culture festival!”
“Hail to the princess! Hail to the princess! Victory for her Highness Theiamillis! Glory for the Forthorthe royal family!”
But just like Koutarou, the two of them were exhausted and were unable to respond to the cheers.
There were covered in white powder and their clothes had scorch marks.
They had both fallen off the balancing beams.
After that, they had fought one another and gradually lost their stamina. By the time they entered the schoolyard, they were barely able to move.
A drop of sweat would slip down the white powder every time they took a step.
“It was quite the dramatic race, but it seems we need to settle this now.”
“That was my intention from the start. Let’s settle this, Theia-dono.”
Despite that, the two of them dragged their legs forward and ran on the track.
The tatamis for Room 106 depended on this obstacle race.
There was no way they would simply back down.

As the two of them got closer to Koutarou, they called out to Sanae next to Koutarou.
“Sanae, is Koutarou alright?”
“Yes, he’s just sleeping…”
“I see, that’s good.”
“Kukuku, it seems you chose the wrong partner, Sanae!”
“Shut up, leave me alone!”
“I think I’ll do just that, fuhahahahaha!”
They ran past Koutarou and reached the tenth obstacle.
“Welcome back, master, and welcome to the last stop, the tenth obstacle~♪”
The ones welcoming Theia and Kiriha were none other than the five members of the cosplay club.
And they spoke in chorus.
Apart from Yurika and the president, the five of them, who didn’t get to participate, served as the staff at the tenth obstacle.
Because of this, they were wearing maid outfits and an armband that had ‘staff’ written on it.
“I have no time to play! What do I need to do here!?”
“There’s no need to rush.”
The vice president, who was in charge of the obstacle, approached them with a box decorated with ribbons and flowers.
“What’s with this box?”
“I’m glad you asked. For the tenth obstacle, we’ll have you participate in a scavenger hunt. Draw a note from this box and borrow the thing written down on it from someone in this schoolyard. Once you’ve borrowed it, head for the goal!”
“I got it!”
“Same here.”
Theia quickly thrust her hand into the hole at the top of the box, with Kiriha following suit.
And when they pulled their hands out, they were holding pieces of paper that had been folded twice.
“Well then, you two, please read your note!”
Following the vice-president’s lead, the two of them read their notes at the same time.
“T-This couldn’t be!?”
“You’re telling me to bring this thing in!?”
The two of them were left astonished, and as they noticed one another, they peeked on the other’s note.
“Fufufufufufu!”
“Hahahahahaha!”
After peeking at their opponent’s note, they both began to laugh.
However, despite their laughing they were glaring at one another.
And they clenched their fists as they took a stance.
It looked like they were about to start a fistfight.
“I thought it would come to this… The road to invasion is covered in blood…”
The following was written on Kiriha’s note:

‘Borrow an A-cup or smaller bra.’
“Hah, bring it on, Kurano Kiriha!”
And the following was written on Theia’s note:
‘Borrow a D-cup or bigger bra.’
Kiriha was disappointed and Theia was excited.
Though they held opposite feelings, they were about to do the same thing.
What they needed was right in front of them.
They were both planning on beating each other down and taking what they needed.
Having started running again, Harumi and Yurika began passing other participants.
It was in part due to the majority of the leading group retiring at the eighth obstacle, but they were also running faster than before.
“I wonder what happened to me… Not only do I feel much better, but I’m running faster than before I collapsed…”
“You don’t need to worry about that at all, Sakuraba-senpai. It would be a different story if you weren’t feeling very good, but you’re fine now, after all.”
After Harumi had regained consciousness, the two of them were for some reason running faster.
And no matter how quickly they ran they didn’t run out of breath nor did they feel any exhaustion.
Anyone would find it odd, let alone Harumi.
“But, I’m really curious…”
“Then think of it as my magic. I’m not wearing this outfit just for show!”
“Nijino-san… Fufufu, I think I’ll do that. That way would be more interesting, wouldn’t it?”
Thanks to Yurika’s cheerful words, a smile returned to Harumi’s lips.
Even though there was no such thing as magic, it would be more fun to think there was.
After hearing Yurika’s words, that was what went through Harumi’s head.
“Yes! I’m the magical girl of love and courage and dreams and hope!”
Seeing Harumi’s mental health restored as well, Yurika couldn’t help but feel happy.
In return, Harumi was convinced that Yurika was a cosplayer, but Yurika had no intention of correcting her.
Even though nobody would believe Yurika when she talked about magic.
This isn’t magic, this is thanks to Sakuraba-senpai’s hard work.
In reality, it was the white magic that Yurika had used. If she convinced Harumi of that, however, it would be the same as denying all of her hard work.
That was why Yurika insisted that it was a stroke of luck due to Harumi’s efforts.
I’m fine with being called a cosplayer if I have to… I just want Sakuraba-senpai to believe in herself.
She had hated the obstacle marathon just a few minutes ago, but now she was having a lot of fun.
“L-Look, Nijino-san, we can see the school gate from here!”
“You’re right! We’re just a little bit away!”
The goal the two of them were desperately trying to reach was now very close.
“Gua!?”
“Guha!”

As Harumi and Yurika ran under the school gates, Theia and Kiriha's fists connected with each other's face.
"That settles it! As Kurano went for a right jab, Theia went for a cross-counter; however, Kurano readjusted her aim and hit her mark! They both have hit each other with a heavy blow and have knocked each other out!"
Their fists impacted on each other's cheek, and they stopped moving in their current position.
"Let's listen to the boxing club's advisor, Tange-sensei's explanation! Sensei, what do you think?"
"Close, so close! If Theia just had a little bit more reach it would've ended up very differently! This was not her fault! If only she had a little bit more reach!"
An excited voice explaining the events filled the schoolyard.
Meanwhile, Theia and Kiriha remained motionless, but eventually ran out of power and collapsed at the same time.
"Both of them have been knocked down!"
"Well done, Theia! The match may have been a draw, but in regards to boxing you were the winner!"
The crowd in bleachers stood up as cheers of joy and applause shook the schoolyard.
However, the praise didn't reach Theia or Kiriha, as they had both knocked each other out.
"B-Boxing...?"
"Is the tenth obstacle a fist fight!?"
Harumi and Yurika anxiously ran past Theia and Kiriha who were collapsed on the track.
They both disliked fighting, so this tenth obstacle truly troubled them.
"S-Satomi-kun!? Even Satomi-kun was!..."
"W-Who did this to him!? I don't want a fist fight!"
Koutarou was passed out next to Theia. Seeing that, Harumi and Yurika grew even more anxious.
"It's not really that hard of an obstacle."
"...R-Really?"
As Sanae, who was with Koutarou said that, Yurika let out a small sigh of relief.
"Koutarou collapsed because he was tired. And those two were just fighting each other."
"I see, thank God..."
Normally, Yurika was terrified of Sanae but right now she was too surprised by so much else to notice, and she showed Sanae a large smile.
However, Sanae was still in a bad mood.

She was angry at Koutarou, who still hadn't woken up.
"Nijino-san, who are you talking to?"
"N-nobody! I'm just talking to myself!"
Harumi couldn't see Sanae, and of course Sanae's voice didn't reach her either.
Which was why when Yurika was talking to Sanae in her current outfit, it looked very strange.
"I see. That's good..."
Harumi instinctively let out a sigh of relief.
If it was just cosplay it could be covered up by calling it a hobby, but if she was talking to someone when no one else was around it was quite scary.
Which was why Harumi was relieved when she heard Yurika was simply talking to herself.
"Welcome back, master!"
Shortly thereafter, Harumi and Yurika arrived at the tenth obstacle.
And it was, of course, the cosplay society that greeted them.
"Vice-president!"
"You're finally here, Yurika-chan!"
"Um, what is the tenth obstacle?"
"It's a scavenger hunt! Hurry up you two and draw your notes! There are some people ahead of you, but if you hurry you can still make it!"
The vice-president explained in a hurry and presented the box to them.
The cosplay society members obviously wanted Yurika to win, so they rushed her on.
At the current moment, Yurika and Harumi were in seventh and eighth place.
Although, with Koutarou, Theia, and Kiriha knocked out, they were actually fourth and fifth.
Which meant there were three others ahead of them.
Those three had entered the crowd to find what they needed, so if they hurried along they still had a chance.
"Sakuraba-senpai!"
"Yes!"
Yurika and Harumi put their hands in the box and drew a note at the same time.
Unlike Theia and Kiriha, they did so calmly; they had no intention of beating down the other party.
"Ah..."
"Auu..."
As they opened their notes, Harumi's expression lit up; however, Yurika's expression turned gloomy.
"I got this. What did you get, Nijino-san?"
"I got this..."
The two of them showed each other their notes.
Harumi had 'A junior in your club' written on hers, and Yurika had 'A friend' written on hers.
"Alright, let's go, Nijino-san!"
"Auu... Go on ahead, Sakuraba-senpai. I will retire here."
Yurika dropped her shoulders with a sad look on her face.
Her eyes were dim and she let out a big sigh.

“Why?”
“I still don’t have any friends…”
Harumi only needed to bring Koutarou with her, so she had no problems.
But finding a friend in the city when Yurika had only recently gotten here was too big of a request for her.
“So just go on ahead, please.”
“It’ll be okay, Yurika-san.”
However, Harumi kept on smiling, she talked to Yurika gently.
“Your friend is right here.”
“Eh…”
“Or am I not enough?”
“N-No, not at all! I-It’s an honor, Sakuraba-senpai!”
Yurika’s instantly smiled and nodded repeatedly.
She was shedding tears of joy, revealing how much it meant to her.
“But I would like you to do me a favor.”
“A favor?”
Yurika stared with a blank look and blinked repeatedly.
Seeing that, Harumi happily winked at her, and put on a smile she rarely showed anyone.
“Could you help me carry Satomi-kun?”
“O-Of course! For as long as you like!”
“Thank you, Nijino-san.”
“No, I should be the one thanking you!”
And as they two of them laughed cheerfully, they ran over to Koutarou.

Winners, Losers and Extra Time

Part 1

Sunday, May 10th:

“E-Eh…?”

Koutarou woke up just as the victory ceremony for the obstacle marathon began.

Some time had passed since Koutarou fainted, and the scenery was already dyed by the evening sun.

“You’re finally awake…”

In front of him was Sanae, who had a sullen expression on her face.

She was in a bad mood after having waited for Koutarou to wake up ever since he lost consciousness.

“Sanae… Eh, wait, what happened to the obstacle marathon!? Where am I!?”

Koutarou jumped up and looked around.

He was in a hospital tent next to the sports festival’s headquarters.

Although the tent had none of the equipment a hospital would have.

The only thing inside of it were blue sleeping bags for injured participants.

Apart from Koutarou, there were two others lying in the tent: Theia and Kiriha.

The tent’s staff were all out; they had, of course, headed towards the eighth obstacle.

“It ended long ago. You passed out and retired just before the tenth obstacle!”

“T-Then who won!? Theia!? Kiriha-san!? Which one!?”

Koutarou pointed at the two of them, asking for the results of the competition.

He wasn’t asking for the results of the obstacle marathon, but rather the ranking for the residents of Room 106.

“Neither. It was us and Yurika.”

“What…?”

Hearing Sanae’s response, Koutarou was speechless; he could never have imagined that outcome.

Me, Sanae and Yurika won…? But I retired from the race!

“W-What does this mean!? How did it come to me and Yurika winning?”

Bewildered, Koutarou shook Sanae’s shoulders.

“C-C-Calm down!”

“How could I possibly calm down!?”

Koutarou kept shaking Sanae.

Having given up on running away, Sanae tried her best to answer Koutarou.

“T-Theia and Kiriha knocked each other out after a fistfight. Though they got a special award, t-they’re treated as having retired. After that, Harumi and Yurika tied, so you, me and Yurika will be taking points from Theia and Kiriha.”

“W-Wait a minute, Sanae! Does that mean Sakuraba-senpai and Yurika won!?”

Surprised, Koutarou stopped shaking Sanae for a moment, before shaking her at twice the speed.

He couldn’t just believe that Harumi and Yurika had won.

“Heeeeeey, K-Koooutaaaroouuu, stoooop!…”

“What do you mean!? Explain yourself right now!”

“If you want to me explain then stop shaking me, you idiot!”
A first-aid kit dropped down on Koutarou’s head.
It was because of Sanae’s Poltergeist.
“O-ouch!”
The corner of the first aid kit slammed into Koutarou’s head.
Because of the impact, Koutarou let go of Sanae and held onto his head.
“Phew, geez…”
“D-Don’t be so unreasonable…”
“You’re the one being unreasonable! Seriously…”
Finally free from Koutarou, Sanae floated up into the air, put both of her hands on her waist and showed a dissatisfied expression as she puffed up her cheeks.
However, even then Sanae properly explained the situation.
“Well, most of the leading group was slowed down by the minefield, right? Most of the leaders had to retire.”
“Ah…”
“During that time, Harumi and Yurika caught up and won the race.”
Thanks to the minefield at the eighth obstacle, the majority of competitors slowed down to a crawl.
Lots of participants tried to rush through it, but the majority failed and retired.
But by the time Harumi and Yurika got there, most of the mines had already gone off and they were able to cross without any problems.
And as a result, the minefield ended up being a big help for the two.
“B-But even then, those two coming back from behind and winning is just…”
“Instead of doubting me, why don’t you look at the victory ceremony?”
Sanae pointed towards the tent’s exit.
Beyond the exit was a podium with a large amount of people around it.
In order to take a look, Koutarou jumped out of the tent.
“Oh…”
Just as Sanae had said, on top of the podium were Harumi and Yurika.
“And the winners are the Knitting Society and Cosplay Society! Despite having the handicap of both being literary clubs and societies! Congratulations, well done!”
The principal’s excited voice could be heard through the speakers.
Harumi and Yurika were being praised by the people around them while blushing.
Being introverts, the two of them were unused to this kind of thing.
But as they were given the trophy from the principal, they smiled while looking at each other.
“T-They really won…”
“See, I told you so.”
“I can’t believe it…”
“That’s the same with everyone.”
Sanae shrugged.

With the principal congratulating the two on top of the podium, it didn't matter how little he believed it.
The two really won.
"...Oh well, in the end it all worked out."
"You could say that."
Harumi stood on the podium and Koutarou had won against the invaders.
I wonder if God noticed Sakuraba-senpai's efforts...
When Koutarou thought of it like that, he felt convinced for some reason.
And showing a small smile, he stared at the two standing on top of the podium.
They were holding onto the trophy while smiling.

Part 2

"...I-it didn't work out at all..."
"Landlord-san!?"
Shizuka suddenly interrupted Koutarou, who was staring at the podium.
Her whole body was covered in black, and her hairstyle now looked like an afro.
"Where's the idiot who planted mines at the eighth obstacle!?"
The reason she looked like that was of course because she had been caught up in several of the explosions at the eight obstacle.
"Satomi-kun! You won't benefit from hiding it from me!"
Shizuka's body was trembling, and her eyes were burning with anger.
She was furious.
"O-over there! She's sleeping in the hospital tent!"
Overwhelmed by Shizuka's presence, Koutarou told her where Theia was.
He didn't have any confidence that he'd be able to hide it from Shizuka, although he had no reason to hide it either.
"So she's over theeeere!?"
Shizuka cracked her knuckles.
She'll die. Theia will without a doubt die...
Koutarou felt that Theia's lifespan decreased for every joint Shizuka cracked.
Shizuka left Koutarou behind and approached the tent.
"Forgive me, Tulip..."
Even though he knew Theia was in danger, Koutarou found himself unable to move.
He was just that scared of Shizuka, and he himself was still angry at her.
"No, I won't forgive you!"
As Koutarou was apologizing towards the tent, another person approached him.
"Mackenzie!?"
"And it's not just me."
Kenji had appeared in front of Koutarou alongside three large men.

Kenji looked similar to Shizuka. His pure white tuxedo and face were pitch black, and his hair was a mess.
“Hey, first-year brat.”
“I’ve been waiting to meet you!”
“Gottsan desu!”
The men alongside Kenji were from the rugby club, the judo club, and the sumo club.
They were also pitch black and could only be told apart thanks to their distinct uniforms.
“Well you see, Kou. These senpai wanted to talk to you.”
Kenji grinned as he cleaned his glasses with a handkerchief.
“Ugh… W-what can I help you with, senpai?”
It couldn’t be…
A cold shiver ran down Koutarou’s back.
With Kenji appearing alongside the three large men, there was only one thing they could want.
“We wanted to thank you for what you did back at the start.”
“Since we’ve thanked this glasses-kun who had nothing to do with it, it’d be unfair if we didn’t thank you too, right?”
“Gottsan desu!”
“I knew it!”
Due to the sudden development Koutarou began to panic.
To think Mackenzie and these people would work together…
The reason Kenji and the rest were working together was because of the minefield.
In order to escape, they had no choice but to work together, so the four them developed a sense of solidarity.
“S-Save me pleb! Use everything in your might to protect me!”
“Tulip!?”
At that moment, Theia jumped at Koutarou, half-crying.
Surprised by the sudden event, Koutarou was somehow able to catch her small body.
Theia was frightened, and when Koutarou put her down she quickly hid behind him.
“S-She’s coming! Shizuka is coming! Prepare for a fight, Koutarou! My life is in danger!”
“What!?”
Shizuka came out of the tent just as Koutarou looked towards the tent.
Her eyes were still burning with anger, and she approached Koutarou and Theia, step by step.
“I see… Satomi-kun, in the end, you’ll cover that girl…”
“W-What’s with this pressure!?”
Shizuka’s glance grew sharper. It held a strong hostility towards Koutarou.
Theia had hid behind Koutarou on her own, but because of that, Shizuka now considered Koutarou an enemy.
“Come on and fight, pleb! I’ll turn you into an aristocrat! So die for my sake!”
“I refuse! Don’t involve me in this!”
“No! I refuse to suffer alone! It’s only natural for a vassal to live and die with his master!”

“I’m not your vassal!”
“At this point, it doesn’t matter if you are my vassal or not! Let’s suffer together!”
“C-Curse you, Tulip!”
“Ooohohoho♪”
Koutarou and Theia were desperate.
They knew just how scary Shizuka really was when she was angry.
They had a bigger chance of winning a fight against a tank.
So Koutarou did not want to get involved no matter what, and Theia didn’t want to be left alone.

Part 3

“…As you can tell, it’s like this.”
“I see, I’ve got it, glasses-kun. Let me apologize for mistaking you.”
“Curse you, why are you pretending like you aren’t popular!? That hurts our pride more than anything!”
“Gottsan desu!”
Staring at Koutarou and Theia arguing, the three men felt that they had a special relationship, and they took a stance.
They also acknowledged Koutarou and Theia as enemies and approached, step by step.
“We’ve treated you unfairly, glasses-kun. We’ll let you rough us up as much as you want later. But right now, we’re going to punish that insolent person in front of us!”
“I’ll help you!”
“Well said, glasses-brat! To think there was someone like you among good looking people!”
“Right now we’re all pitch black; good looks or not, it doesn’t matter!”
“Gottsan desu!!”
“Truly well said, glasses-kun. I like you!”
“Prepare yourselves, Satomi-kun, Theia-san! We’ll have you pay for all the trouble you’ve caused!”
Kenji, Shizuka, and the three large men approached Koutarou and Theia.
Explaining or reasoning with them wouldn’t work now.
So this is it… looks like I have no choice!
In front of those five, Koutarou finally made up his mind.
“We’re running, Tulip!”
“Y-Yeah!”
Koutarou pulled Theia’s hand and started running.
“Kou! Wait!”
“After them! Don’t let them get away!!”
“Gottsan desu!”
“Mackenzie-kun, cut off their escape path!”
Of course, the five chased after them.
“Pleb, become my decoy! In return, I’ll make sure not to step on you starting tomorrow!”
“No way! I don’t care if you step on me! You be the decoy!!”

With the two of them running and the five chasing after, the obstacle marathon entered overtime.
“You idiots…”
“Don’t say that. Even like that, Theia-dono was trying to be considerate.”
Sanae and Kiriha stood in front of the hospital tent, and they were watching Koutarou and the rest running.
“Trying to be considerate? That’s a lie…”
“No one was injured or killed, right?”
“That’s true, but… it was obvious Shizuka would get angry if she used something like that. Why doesn’t she get that?…”
“That princess hates losing. She did it despite knowing what would happen.”
The mines were designed to use bright light and shockwaves to disable their victim, so injuries rarely happened.
A light burn and an afro at most.
And as Yurika passed the eighth obstacle she used healing magic, reducing the injured even more.
Of course, nobody noticed Yurika helping.
“Don’t act innocent. I already know. Everyone falling at the start was your doing, right?”
“I have no idea what you’re talking about…”
Based on the situation, Sanae felt Kiriha running at the top was the most suspicious.
However, Kiriha warded off the doubts with a smile.
No evidence remained in her case.
“…As I thought, you really are the most troublesome one.”
“How rude. I only want to become Koutarou’s lover. Together, we’ll be able to create a happy family.”
“You liar, that’s not what you’re thinking at all… Geez, what’s with everyone today…”
Today, Sanae looked like the most normal one. Everyone else was acting strange.
“Fufufu, that hits home.”
“I wish you’d understand my worries… Geez.”
As Sanae was complaining, Koutarou and Theia ran past in front of her.
“H-Hey, pleb! I actually still have one more mine!”
“Stop it, Tulip! If you use that, you’ll definitely be killed!”
“But we’ll escape being caught right now!”
“Stoooop! Use your head!!”
Why is Koutarou hogging all the fun!?
Sanae was dissatisfied being left outside of the group.

“Look at this! I can’t believe it! I’ve never seen a ghost this dense and stable before!”
“Do you’ll think we’ll be able to sell her for a high price if we catch her!?”
They were by a corner of the schoolyard, pointing a strange device that looked like a speed gun at Sanae and measuring some kind of number.
And they were jumping for joy because of the results of that measurement.
“Yeah, we’ll become billionaires! We’ll be able to escape poverty!”

“We did it, Aniki!”
They had been following Sanae around ever since they learned of her existence a few days ago.
The glances Koutarou had felt today were not someone watching him, but them watching Sanae.

Afterword

Long time no see. It's Takehaya. It's been four months since the first volume, and I've now been able to finish the second volume. This is all thanks to the readers who bought the first volume, so I would like to start off by thanking everybody.

Now then, I'd like to introduce some of the elements in this novel. The invaders aren't just satisfied with Room 106, and they've now begun their invasion of Koutarou's oasis, Kitsushouharukaze High School. Using all kinds of tricks, will they involve the entirety of the school?

Actually, as I was writing this afterword, I got a call from my friend, who just got married. He said his child will be born in September. This left me a bit mortified, so I decided to write it down here.

You bastard, who do you think you are, finding happiness!?

You're making me envious, you bastard.

You told me, knowing I'm a bachelor, didn't you, you bastard.

You better show me a picture of the newborn, you bastard.

But seriously, congratulations!

Anyways, the page is about to run out of space, so I'll leave it at this. Finally, I would like to thank the publishers, the illustrator Poko-san, my friends who would give me advice, and everyone who bought this novel.

See you again, hopefully in the third volume's afterword.

June, 2009

Takehaya